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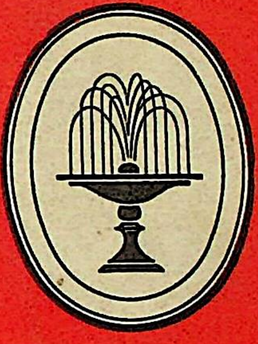
THE IMITATION OF CHRIST

by

Thomas a Kempis

Newly Translated and
Introduced by
GEORGE F. MAINE



With a Foreword by
L. M. J. DELAISSE

This is the book which has been translated into more languages than any other work, with the sole exception of the Bible. The reason for its continuing and increasing popularity, more than five hundred years after its conception, is explained by G. F. Maine, translator of this new edition, in his introduction:

> "Thomas a Kempis wrote from the heart, and it is in the hearts of men that his celestial music evokes a response of high feeling and attunement to the things of the spirit . . . The history of the literary triumph of this book reads like a romance."

Thomas a Kempis was an Augustinian monk and his *De Imitatione Christi* consists of four books or treatises on the religious life. In the simple beauty and faith of his work many generations of Christians all over the world, and of all denominations, have found practical help, immediate comfort and inspiration.

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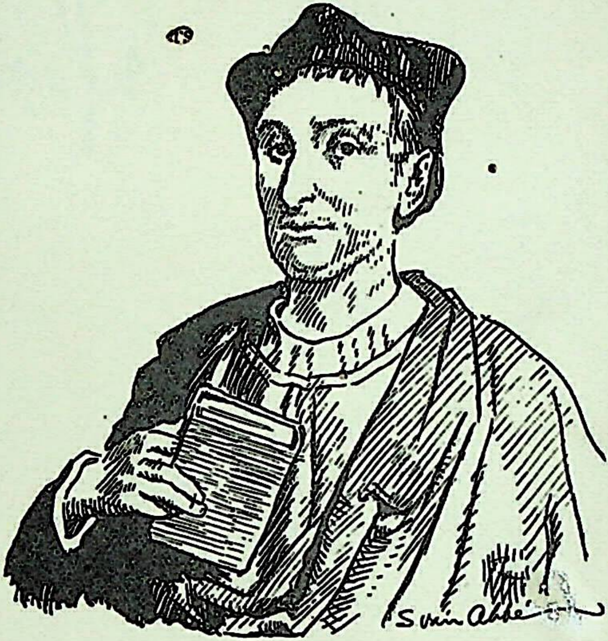
THE IMITATION OF CHRIST



THOMAS A KEMPIS

1379 - 1471

THE IMITATION OF CHRIST

THOMAS A KEMPIS

A New Translation, with an Introduction, by
GEORGE F. MAINE

Foreword by
DR. L. M. J. DELAISSE
of the Royal Library, Brussels

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THOMAS A KEMPIS

Thomas a Kempis was born in 1379 or 1380 at Kempen (near Dusseldorf) then belonging to the archiepiscopal principality of Cologne.

He was the second son of John and Gertrude Hamerken (or Hammerlein, 'Little Hammer'), latinised, as was the custom of the age, into 'Malleolus'. The name points to the profession, and it is likely that John Hamerken was an artisan in the metal craft which was widely practised in the Rhineland. His wife seems to have kept the village school.

At the age of thirteen, like his brother some years before him, Thomas went to the school at Deventer, the centre of the 'New Devotion', a revival movement of mystical Christianity founded by Gerhard Groote and organised as a lay order, the 'Devout Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life', by Florentius Radwyn.

Radwyn took personal charge of the boy, gave him board and lodging free in his own house, introduced him to the rector of the schools and even paid his first school fees. Thomas became his most fervent disciple.

He remained seven years at Deventer, and at school proved himself an apt pupil, noted for his neatness and skill in transcribing manuscripts, an occupation which became one of his lifelong labours. In addition to his own numerous writings he was to copy many treatises of the Fathers, missals, and the Bible in five volumes.

In 1399 he joined the Canons Regular of Windesheim, an Augustinian order, at their newly founded priory of

Mount St. Agnes, (Agnetenberg) near Zwolle, of which his brother John was then the prior. The priory was as yet unfinished; there were no claustral buildings, no gardens and no funds. The priory church had only just been begun.

Thomas, in his chronicle of the monastery which covers almost seventy years, tells of the early struggles of the community of Mount St. Agnes, its steady development and eventual prosperity.

He became a novice in 1407 and was ordained priest in 1413, a year after the consecration of the church. He was twice elected sub-prior (in 1429 and 1448) and once held the administrative office of procurator, for which, however, he was temperamentally unsuited.

His early biographers describe him as a man of middle height, dark complexion and vivid colouring, with a broad forehead and piercing eyes. He was kind and genial with all, but shy and retiring and quite unworldly. His favourite occupations were reading, writing and prayer in the solitude of his cell; yet he was an inspired and impassioned preacher.

He died on August 8th 1471 at the age of 91, and his body was buried in the eastern cloister of the priory. Two hundred years after the Reformation, in the course of which the priory was destroyed, his remains were transferred to Zwolle and enshrined in a reliquiary.

The Imitation of Christ, (De Imitatione Christi), first appeared anonymously in 1418 and was soon accorded wide welcome and attributed to various writers. In 1441 Thomas completed and signed his name to a codex containing four books of *The Imitation of Christ* and nine minor treatises. The work has been translated into fifty languages and has established itself in the course of the centuries, next to the Bible, as the most influential religious book of Christendom.

Early in the seventeenth century a fierce controversy began over the authorship of the work, Jean Charlier de Gerson (1363–1429), Chancellor of the University of Paris, being brought forward as its author. The issue will probably never be finally settled; however the bulk of the evidence available strongly favours the authenticity of Thomas a Kempis's authorship.

H. d. R.

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FOREWORD

After completing his new translation of *The Imitation of Christ*, and while finally preparing his work for publication, Mr. G. F. Maine wrote to the Royal Library in Brussels, seeking certain information about the autograph manuscript of Thomas a Kempis, which contains among others the four opuscules known as *The Imitation of Christ.* Dr. L. M. J. Delaissé, Assistant Keeper in the Department of Manuscripts at the Royal Library, who had been working on that manuscript for many years, but whose books on the subject had not yet been published, set out in his reply to Mr. Maine the conclusions he had reached in the course of his researches. Very soon after this, Mr. Maine died. The publishers, knowing that he had been greatly impressed by Dr. Delaissé's findings, and that he had hoped for permission to record some of this new information in his own book, asked Dr. Delaissé if he would care to revise Mr. Maine's Introduction. Here are Dr. Delaissé's comments:

"The publishers very kindly asked me to revise Mr. Maine's Introduction in the light of modern theories. In spite of his very kind reaction to my letter, I feel that it is not for me to make any alteration in Mr. Maine's text. I think it better to set out briefly my own conclusions, which he had so generously approved. They explain the text he translated.

The material examination of Thomas a Kempis's autograph (MSS. 5855–61 in the Royal Library in Brussels) which was written, signed and dated by his own hand, shows that Thomas had copied thirteen opuscules which were materially independent of each other. Among them one finds the four treatises which have since become *The Imitation of Christ*, although they are not disposed in the MS. in the same order as that in which the familiar editions place them.

Some of these opuscules are "fair copies" made by Thomas himself, with few corrections or changes in the text, but most still show extensive correction, even the punctuation being greatly altered. These superficial amendments are so numerous as to indicate the care not merely of an adaptor, who would be concerned only with the content, the ideas or their expression, but of a zealous author revelling in the continuing improvement of his song, overflowing with the love of God.

Of the many copies of Thomas's thirteen opuscules (there are more than seven hundred MSS.) some comprise only one treatise, while others contain groups of these opuscules, varying both in number and in the order of their presentation. These copies were spread among the monasteries and even, as early as the middle of the 15th century, reached the court of the Duke of Burgundy.

These different groups of treatises, generally anonymous and varying greatly, were sometimes attributed to different authors and were given different titles, but the attribution to Thomas a Kempis is by far the earliest and most frequent. Some groups and some titles were more successful than others, and *The Imitation of Christ* in four parts was the version of Thomas's work most frequently copied and the first to be printed. It is also the one nowadays most widely known. The *Musica Ecclesiastica* in thr[illegible]ooks only, and not always in the conventional order, was another presentation and not a different work. That version, in Latin, was already in existence in England in 1438, and was soon to be translated into medieval English. Mr. Maine mentions this translation at the beginning of his Introduction. Such a presentation of Thomas's work explains why the attribution to him of Book IV of *The Imitation of Christ* is sometimes doubted.

It can be said that, in one sense, Thomas a Kempis is not the author of *The Imitation of Christ*, but I hope I have proved, in my books *, that he *is* the author of all the opuscules of the autograph and so of those that were copied more often than the others and were grouped artificially under the name of *The Imitation of Christ*. The title is not appropriate, being merely that of the first chapter of Book I. For this reason many copies in which the treatises appeared in a different order were given another title.

If, in this very controversial field, my work has been useful, it is only because the autograph manuscript of Thomas a Kempis, and the copies of it, had not been sufficiently examined. It is my hope that these ideas will throw a new light on the text which Mr. G. F. Maine translated with so much scholarly care."

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* *L. M. J. Delaissé.* Le manuscrit autograph de Thomas a Kempis et l'Imitation de Jésus-Christ. Examen archéologique et édition diplomatique du Bruxellensis 5855-61 (in *Publications de Scriptorium*, vol. II) Antwerp, 1956, x + 546 pp. + 2 pl. (The introduction and the edition are in two separate volumes). — EDITOR.

The reader will no doubt have noted the absence of the accent (à) from the name Thomas a Kempis as printed in this volume, almost every previous edition having treated the name as if it were French. For the correction of this "traditional mistake" we are indebted to Dr. Delaissé, who reminded us that the name is Thomas van Kempen in Dutch, de Kempen in French, and a Kempis or Kempensis in Latin, the "a" in Latin being equivalent to "ab" (from).

L. M. J. DELAISSE

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

When, in 1882, Dr. John K. Ingram rediscovered in the library of Trinity College, Dublin, a manuscript of the first three parts of an early English translation of *De Imitatione Christi*, it was found to bear the name *Musica Eccliastica.* Never was name more happily chosen, for, in the words of Evelyn Underhill, "that condition of joyous and awakened love to which the contemplative passes when his purification is at an end, is the state not of Illumination, but of Song. He does not 'see' reality; he 'hears' it. For him, as for St. Francis, it is a heavenly melody."

Thomas a Kempis wrote from the heart, and it is in the hearts of men that his celestial music evokes a response of high feeling and attunement to the things of the spirit. Need we wonder, then, that George Eliot (1820–1880) spoke of *The Imitation of Christ* as "turning bitter waters into sweetness . . . a lasting record of human needs and human consolations; the voice of a brother who, ages ago, felt and suffered and renounced—in the cloister perhaps, with serge gown and tonsured head, with much chanting and long fasts, and with a fashion of speech different from ours—but under the same silent far-off heavens, and with the same passionate desires, the same strivings, the same failures, the same weariness."

And in the margin of one of the leaves of the Dublin manuscript is written: "I do hear that this booke was made by one Thomas a Kempist; and let a man look on any chapter of the said booke, and he shall find something suteable to his condicion." How true that is, for Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1566), the founder of the Jesuit Order, called it "the pearl of books", and Auguste Comte (1798–1857), founder of the system of philosophy known as Positivism, read a chapter of it daily for many years before his death, "continuing to the end to find in it new beauties, and to gather from it new fruits moral and intellectual."

Thomas a Kempis, so named from his birthplace, the village of Kempen near Dusseldorf, was born in 1379 or 1380 and died on August 8th, 1471. His family name was Hamerken, which means Little Hammer, latinised as *malleolus*. When a youth of thirteen he joined the "Brotherhood of the Common Life" at Deventer in Holland, and in the last year of the fourteenth century he entered the new convent of Mount St. Agnes near Zwolle, of which his brother John was prior. Six years later (1407) he took the vows of the Augustinian order, and, after the lapse of six years more (1413) was ordained to the priesthood. He became sub-prior in 1429 when forty-nine years of age, and was re-elected to the same office in 1448. Thus, by far the greater part of his long life was spent in the quiet seclusion of this monastery; a life dedicated to God, to acts of devotion, the copying of manuscripts, the writing of letters, sermons, hymns, biographies of the Saints, treatises on the ascetic life, and, best of all, to the production of that immortal work, *De Imitatione Christi*. Truly this dwarfs the rest into insignificance, for it is world-famous not only as an example of Christian religious and devotional literature, but as a kind of spiritual biography. For here the subjective *meditation* became the objective *imitation*, and subject and object were one in the Person of his Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, whom all his life he strove to serve with love, humility and zeal.

The history of the literary triumph of this book reads like a romance. As in the case of John Bunyan's immortal work, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, written in Bedford jail, it has been translated into as many languages as the Bible itself. The most ancient perfect manuscript written in Thomas's own hand is in the Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique at Brussels, and is dated 1441; the earliest manuscript of Book One is dated 1424. It may be taken as proved that the *Imitation* was written between 1380 and 1425, and most probably during the first quarter of the fifteenth century. There is evidence that it was not issued as a complete work, but that each of the three parts was put into circulation soon after it was written.

The first edition of *De Imitatione Christi* was printed in Augsberg in 1486, and in Germany alone prior to the sixteenth century more than twenty impressions were printed. A notable edition is a heptaglot produced at Sulzbach in 1837, which, besides the original Latin, contains later versions in six languages—Italian, Spanish, French, German, English and Greek.

The simplicity and dignity of what is commonly called the Old Version (examples of which are the Dublin and Cambridge manuscripts, which date from about the middle of the fifteenth century) has never been excelled. These manuscripts contain only the first three parts of the *Imitation* and the following is an example of how the unknown translator of the Dublin manuscript rendered a portion of the third chapter of Part One. First the Latin:

> Dic mihi, ubi sunt modo omnes illi domini et magistri, quos bene novisti dum adhuc viverent et studiis florerent? Jam eorum praebendas alii possident et nescio utrum de eis recogitant. In vita sua aliquid esse videbantur, et modo de illis tacetur. O quam cito transit gloria mundi! Utinam vita eorum scientiae ipsorum concordasset! Tunc bene studuissent et legissent. Quam multi pereunt per vanam scientiam in saeculo, qui parum curant de Dei servito! Et quia magis eligunt magni esse quam humiles, ideo evanescunt in cogitationibus suis.

And now the old English:

> Telle me now, where are the lordes and maistres that thou knewist sometyme, whiles thei lyved and florished in scoles? Now other men have her prebendes, and I wote not whethir thei ones thenke upon hem. In her lyves somewhat thei apperid; and now of hem spekith almost no man. O lorde, how sone passith the glory of this worlde! Wolde God that her lif be accordyng to her kunnyng, for then had thei wel studied and wel radde. How many ben there that perisshith in this worlde by veyn konnyng, that litel recchith of the service of God. And for thei chese rather to be grete than meke, therefore thei vanisshe awey in her owne thoughtes.

In sharp contrast is Dr. William Atkynson's translation, which, while it indulges in rhetorical elaboration, paraphrases parts of the original Latin, omits others, and introduces matter foreign to the a Kempis text, attains a high degree of earnestness and spiritual feeling. This translation was made at the desire of Margaret, Countess of Richmond and Derby, the mother of King Henry the Seventh, and printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1504.

The following is Atkynson's rendering of the Old Version passage already quoted:

> Where be now all the royall poetes with theyr craftye conveyed poemes, and elegant oratours with theyr oracions garnisshed with eligancy: the philosophers with theyr pregnaunt reasons and sentences? Divers of these maner of clerkes we haue knowen in oure days: now theyr curiosite is passed and other men occupie theyr prebendes and promocions that they poss(ess)ed: If they were here now agayne, I suppose they wolde never labour so busily for curiosite in knowledge ne temporall promocyons. Nowe they had lever than all this worlde that theyr entent had been accordynge to the holy doctryne of scrypture: than the study had ben happy. O howe many in manner of every state perisshith in this worlde by vayne glory that more desyre to please prynces and prelates and other patrons for a temporall promocyon than truly and inwardly to serve God for the promocions eternall. These desyre rather by pomp and pryde to be great in the worlde than by mekeness and charyte to be in favoure with God, and therefore they vanysshe in theyr thoughtis and desyres as the smoke, that ever the more it ascendeth the more it fadeth and fayleth.

The bibliographer will also be interested in the English translation of Book Four, *(De Sacramento or Devota Exhortatio ad sacram Communionem)*, made by Margaret herself from the first French translation published at Toulouse in 1488 and printed along with Atkynsons's version of the three preceding Books in 1504.

One of the most informative books on the subject ever to be published is that edited by John K. Ingram LL.D., for The Early English Text Society. It appeared in 1893 and contains in addition to a scholarly preface, upon which I have drawn copiously for this introduction, the earliest English translation of the first three books of *De Imitatione Christi*, Atkynson's version of the same books, and the Lady Margaret's version of Book Four, together with notes and a glossary. In comparing translations, care must be taken to ensure that the Latin is a faithful rendering of the Autograph of 1441.

Volume two of the *Christian Pattern* (second edition, 1710) contains a translation of some of the minor writings of a Kempis. The only complete edition of his works known to me is that of Sommalius which dates from the seventeenth century. Both of these works are now very rare.

De Imitatione Christi is also of singular interest to the student of literature. As seven cities contended for the honour of being accounted the birthplace of the author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and as, in our day, many are convinced that the authorship of Shakespeare's plays must be attributed to Francis Bacon, so there have been a number of rival claimants to the authorship of *De Imitatione Christi*. Up to the beginning of the seventeenth century the only competitor for this honour was Jean Charlier de Gerson (1363–1429), a noted theologian and Chancellor of the University of Paris.

Indeed in the introductory sentences to Atkynson's translation are the words: "compyled in Laten by the right worshypfull doctor, master John Gerson . . .," and the sentence which prefaces the first chapter of Book One begins: "Here begynneth the boke of Jo[illegible] Gerson, chaunceler of Paris."

In 1604, Mauriguez, the Spanish Jesuit, found another manuscript in which strangely enough, the authorship is attributed to another John Gerson, or Gesen, an abbot. The coincidence of the names, alike in sound and so nearly alike in spelling, is a curious circumstance that for a time gave colour to the notion that Gerson or Gesen was the author of the work. Thenceforward the controversy grew in violence and bitterness,' involving not only men of letters, but venerable universities, religious orders and other corporate bodies, all of which took their stand as advocates on one side or another. These included the Congregation of the Index, the Parliament of Paris, and the Académie Française. So there passed into history a great literary battle, waged with vehemence and much polemical skill, the history and details of which will be found in Malou's *Recherches*, and in *Thomas a Kempis* by F. R. Cruise, published in 1887.

How strange that this famous book, unsurpassed in popularity, and the product not of remote antiquity but of the last five hundred years of authentic recorded history, should still be accounted by some as of doubtful authorship, and subject to at least three rival claimants! M. Malou, the Belgian historian of the controversy, and others who have weighed the evidences calmly and impartially, decided that there was no trustworthy evidence to invalidate the claims of Thomas a Kempis, and gave their verdict in his favour, a verdict which more recent research tends but to confirm. Nor should it be forgotten that Johann Busch, who passed a great part of [illegible] life in Windesheim, only a few miles from Mount St. Agnes, confirmed the Thomas a Kempis authorship, as did Hermann Rhyd, a German member of the Windesheim Congregation, who had personally known Thomas. Finally, John Mauburne, who became a canon in Mount St. Agnes within a few years of Thomas's death, states more than once that Thomas wrote the *Imitation.*

The theology of the treatise is, of course, that of a devout Catholic and ascetic. The fourth book, which is the third in the Autograph, is devoted to the Eucharist and the doctrine of The Real Presence, and there are some who think it was probably written by another hand. Nevertheless the whole work is of a most elevating and spiritual character and reveals the beauty of the author's life and his deep insight into the personality and teaching of Jesus Christ. Born of the spirit, it transcends all human limitations and has given help and guidance to Christian believers of every communion, and to many of other faiths throughout the world.

That the authorship has been disputed need not disturb us, for while such controversies have an interest for many whose earnest desire is to put right what they believe to be wrong, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the *Shakespeare* plays, the *Summa Theologia* of Aquinas and the *Imitation* are real and lasting. *Litera scripta manet:* the written letter remains. It suffices that we have the fruits of such great minds even if we cannot always with certainty identify the personalities—for in truth all are one family; all come from God and all return to God. Let us rejoice that their thoughts and experiences have been preserved to give guidance and inspiration to mankind upon the road that leads to immortality.

G. F. MAINE

BOOK ONE

Administrations for the Spiritual Life

CHAPTER I

Of the Imitation of Christ, and Contemp[illegible]ll the Vanities of the World

HE *that followeth Me walketh not in darkness,* saith the Lord. These are the words of Christ, by which we are admonished to imitate His life and example, if we would be truly enlightened and delivered from all blindness of heart. Therefore let our foremost resolve be to meditate upon the Life of Jesus Christ. The teaching of Christ excelleth all the doctrines of the Saints; and he that hath the Spirit will find therein the hidden manna. But it often happeneth that many who hear the Gospel are little moved by it for they have not the Spirit of Christ. Whosoever would fully and with his whole heart understand the words of Christ, must strive to fashion his life according to that of Christ.

What will it avail thee to dispute learnedly about the Trinity if thou lack humility and thus displease the Trinity? High-sounding words do not make a man holy and righteous; but a virtuous life endeareth him to God. I had rather feel contrition than understand the definition thereof. If thou didst know the whole Bible by heart and the teachings of all the philosophers, what would all this avail thee without the love of God, and without His grace?

Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity, save to love God and serve Him only. This is the highest wisdom; to renounce the world and to make daily progress towards the Kingdom of Heaven. Wherefore it is vanity to covet riches and to put your trust in them. Vanity it is to court worldly honours and to seek to climb to high estate. Vanity it is to [illegible]mit to the desires of the flesh, and to ardently long for that which must hereafter bring thee grievous punishment. Vanity it is to wish that thou mayest live long, and to be careless to live virtuously. It is vanity to be heedful only of this present life, and to take no thought for that which is to come. Vanity it is to give thy love to transient and perishable things, rather than to press forward to the Kingdom where everlasting joy abideth.

Call often to mind the proverb: *The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.* Endeavour therefore to withdraw thy heart from the love of things visible, and attune thyself to things invisible and eternal. For they that succumb to the pleasures of the senses do sully their conscience and lose the favour of God's grace.

CHAPTER 2

Of Having a Humble Opinion of Oneself

IT is natural that man should desire knowledge; but what doth knowledge avail him without the fear of God? An humble rustic that serveth God is better than a proud philosopher who, neglecting the good life, contemplateth the courses of the stars. He that knoweth himself well groweth ever more conscious of his own sinfulness, and findeth no delight in the praises of man. Were I endowed with all the knowledge in the world, and lacked love, what would that avail me in the sight of God, who will judge me according to my deeds?

Restrain thyself from an inordinate desire for knowledge, for therein lurks great distractions and delusions. The learnèd are well pleased to seem so to others and to be accounted wise; but much that is to be found in learning little profiteth the soul. He that is intent upon things other than those that will help his soul's salvation is lacking in wisdom. Words will not satisfy the soul; but a good life giveth comfort to the mind, and a pure conscience affordeth great confidence in the sight of God. The greater thy knowledge and the better thine understanding, the more rigorously wilt thou be judged, unless thy life be also most holy. Be not therefore exalted in spirit because of any skill or knowledge thou mayest possess, but rather let the knowledge thou hast been given make thee humble and cautious. If thou thinkest that thou knowest and understandest many things, remember also that there are still more which thou knowest not. Be not high-minded, but rather acknowledge thine own ignorance.

Why dost thou esteem thyself above others, since so many are more learnèd and more wise in the Law of God than thou? If thou wouldst learn anything of lasting benefit, seek to be unknown and little esteemed of men. For a true knowledge and understanding of himself is man's highest and most profitable lesson. To account himself as nothing, but always to think well and highly of others, is true wisdom and perfection. Shouldest thou see another sin openly, or commit some grievous offence, do not deem thyself better than he, for thou knowest not how long thou wilt be able to remain virtuous. We are all frail; and there are none more frail than thyself.

CHAPTER 3

Of the Doctrine of Truth

BLESSÈD is he whom Truth herself doth teach, not by symbols and words that pass away, but of her own essence. Because of our lack of discernment, our opinions and feelings do often mislead us. What availeth great searching for, and disputation over, hidden and obscure things, for our ignorance of which we shall not so much as be reproved at the Day of Judgment? It is great unwisdom to neglect the things that are profitable and necessary, and to give our whole attention to things curious and harmful. In truth, we have eyes and see not! And what have we to do with *genus* and *species* and the dry notions of the logicians?

He to whom the Eternal Word speaketh is set free from a multitude of opinions. From that One Word all things have existence; all things speak of that One which is the Beginning, which also speaketh unto us. Without that Word, no man understandeth or judgeth rightly. Verily, he to whom all things are One, who reduceth all things to One, who seeth all things as One, the same will enjoy quietude of heart and mind, and abide in God's peace. O God, who art the truth, make me one with Thee in love everlasting. I am oftentimes wearied by hearing and reading many things: in Thee, Lord, is all that I would have and can desire. Let all manner of learned men hold their peace; let all creation be silent in Thy sight; let Thou alone, O Lord, speak unto me.

The more a man is inwardly united with Thee in simplicity and purity of heart, the more and higher things doth he understand, for he receiveth illumination from above. A pure, humble, and immoveable spirit is not distracted though it be employed in many worldly activities; for seeking nothing for itself, it performeth all things to the glory of God. What hindereth and troubleth thee more than the undisciplined passions of thine own heart? A good and devout man inwardly disposeth himself beforehand to the tasks which he is to perform; thus they lead him not according to the desires of a vicious inclination, for he ordereth them according to the dictates of right reason. Who hath a harder combat than he that laboureth to overcome himself? He conquers who overcomes himself, and our constant endeavour must be to grow a little in holiness every day.

In this life all perfection containeth some measure of imperfection; and no man's knowledge is without some darkness. A humble knowledge of oneself is a surer way to God than a deep search for learning; yet learning itself is not to be despised, nor should the mere knowing of any thing which is good in itself be regarded with aversion, for such is ordained by God. Nevertheless a good conscience and a virtuous life cometh always before learning. But because many rate knowledge higher than right-action, therefore are they often deceived, and reap but little fruit of their labours.

O, if men exercised the same diligence in the rooting out of vices and the planting of virtues as they do in controversy, there would be fewer evils and scandals in the world, and less laxity in religious houses. Truly, at the Day of Judgment, we shall not be examined in what we have read, but in what we have done; not how eloquently we have spoken, but how uprightly we have lived. Tell me, where now are all those Masters and Doctors that thou knewest aforetime when they lived and flourished in the schools? Now others have taken their places and those learnèd men are rarely or never called to mind. In their lifetime they seemed important, but now hardly any man speaks of them.

O Lord, how soon passeth away the glory of this world! O that their lives had been of equal merit with their learning, for then had their reading and study been to good purpose! How many there be in this world that little esteem the service of God, and perish by reason of vain learning! They choose to be great rather than humble, and are consumed by their own vanity. He that is endowed with God's love is truly great. He is truly noble, that humbleth himself, and setteth at naught the high honours of the world. He is truly wise that accounteth all earthly things as ordure, so that he may gain Christ. And he that renounceth his own will and doeth the will of God, hath true wisdom.

CHAPTER 4

Of Wisdom and Forethought in our Actions

WE must not give ear to every saying or suggestion, but ought carefully and slowly to ponder all things according to the will of God. But alas! such is human weakness, that we are often more ready to believe and speak evil of others, rather than good. Perfect men do not give credence to everything they hear; for they know that human frailty is prone to evil, and liable to misconstrue the spoken word.

It is great wisdom not to be rash in thy actions, nor to remain obstinate in thine own opinions; furthermore, of this same wisdom, thou ought not to believe everything thou hearest, nor presently seek to relate to others what thou hast heard or believed. Take counsel with him that is wise and of good conscience; seek to be instructed by one that is better than thyself rather than to follow thine own intentions. A good life maketh a man wise in the ways of God and enlargeth his heart, and the more resigned unto God, the more wise and prudent will he be in all things, and the more at peace.

CHAPTER 5

Of Reading the Holy Scriptures

TRUTH, not eloquence, is to be sought for in the Holy Scriptures. All such works ought to be read with the Spirit wherewith they were written. We should search the Scriptures, rather for that which will be to our spiritual profit, than for subtleties of speech. We ought to read simple and de[illegible] books as willingly as we do those that are lofty and profound. Let not the authority of the writer concern thee, whether his learning be great or small, but let the love of pure truth draw thee to read his words. Ask not who said this or that, but mark what is spoken.

Men pass away, but the truth of the Lord remaineth for ever. God speaks unto us in many ways and without respect of persons. Our own curiosity often hindereth us in the reading of the Scriptures, and we tend to examine and discuss that which should be simply passed over and accepted. If thou desire to reap benefit, read with humility, simplicity and faith; nor ever crave the reputation of learning. Inquire diligently and hear in silence the words of the Saints; and let not the parables of the Fathers displease thee, for they are not recounted without good cause.

CHAPTER 6

Of Inordinate Desires

WHENSOEVER a man desireth anything inordinately, he straightway suffereth disquiet in himself. The proud and the covetous can never rest; but the poor and such as are humble in spirit enjoy abundant peace. The man that is not yet perfectly dead to self is soon tempted and quickly overcome by small and trivial things. He that is feeble in spirit, and who is as yet in bondage to carnal and to material things, findeth great difficulty in severing himself from earthly desires. Therefore is he oftentimes sad and tormented when he withdraweth himself [illegible] little from them, and easily moved to anger when others oppose his will.

And if he should succumb to his lustful appetite and obtain his desire, he afterwards suffereth disquiet of heart and remorse of conscience, for that he yielded to his passion and thus destroyed the very peace he sought for. True peace of heart is to be had not by giving way to, but by resisting the passions. Thus the heart of a carnal man, or of one wholly given up to outward things, is devoid of peace: peace abideth only in the heart that is fervent and steadfast in the things of the spirit.

CHAPTER 7

Of Avoiding Vain Hope and Arrogance

VAIN is he that putteth his hope in man or in any living creature. Be not ashamed to serve others for the love of Jesus Christ; nor be esteemed poor in this world. Rely not upon thyself, but put thy trust in God. Do what lieth in thy power and God will assist thy good intentions. Trust not in thine own knowledge nor in the cleverness of any man living, but rather in the grace of God, which helpeth the meek and humbleth the arrogant.

Rejoice not in riches if thou have them, nor in thy powerful friends, but in God who giveth all things, and above all desireth to give thee Himself. Pride not thyself upon thy physical stature nor upon the beauty of thy person, the which a little sickness may corrupt and disfigure. Take not pleasure in thy talents and abilities, nor in thy wit, lest thereby thou displease God, from Whom cometh all such natural endowments.

Esteem not thyself to be better than others, lest peradventure in the sight of God, who knowest thy heart, thou be accounted more sinful than they. Be not proud of thy good works: God's judgments differ from man's judgments, and that which pleaseth men often offendeth God. If there be any virtue in thee, recollect that others have it in greater abundance, that thou mayest preserve thy humility. It will hurt thee not if thou rank thyself under all; it will harm thee exceedingly if thou esteem thyself to be above others. In the heart of the humble true peace findeth an perpetual habitation; but the heart of the proud is fraught with envy and indignation.

CHAPTER 8

Of Guarding Against too much Familiarity

LAY not thy heart open to every man, but, in all thy affairs, take counsel of the wise, and of them that fear God. Go rarely among young people and strangers. Flatter not the rich; nor seek to appear in the presence of great men. Associate rather with humble and plain men, with the devout and virtuous, and confer with them on the things that edify. Be not familiar with any woman;

but in general commend all virtuous women to God. Desire the fellowship of God alone and of His holy Angels; and shun the acquaintance of men.

Have charity towards all; familiarity with all is not expedient. Sometimes it happeneth that one, as yet unknown to us, brilliant and highly esteemed of men, hath a presence which offendeth and maketh dark the eyes of others when they behold him. So, too, we think sometimes to please others by our company, whereas we oftentimes displease them by the faults they discover in us.

CHAPTER 9

Of Obedience and Subjection

IT is a very great thing to live under Rule in obedience to a superior, and not to be one's own master. It is much safer to obey than to govern. Many live under obedience rather from necessity than from love, but such are discontented in spirit and do easily repine: nor can they attain to freedom of mind until they willingly, and with their whole heart, submit themselves to God. Go whither thou wilt, thou shalt find no rest save in humble subjection to the rule of a superior. Yet many, deluded by the desire for change, move from place to place.

Truly, every man followeth his own bent, and inclineth most to those of similar tastes, and such as are like-minded. But if God be amongst us, we must sometimes be prepared to give up our own opinion for the sake of peace. Who is so wise that he can fully understand all things? Be not therefore over-confident in thine own opinions, but willingly and gladly [illegible] ear to the opinions of others. If thou relinquish for God even that which thou thinkest to be right, and acceptest the opinion of another, it will the more profit thee.

I have many times heard that it is safer to take counsel than to give it. Furthermore it may well be that the opinion of each is good; therefore to refuse to yield to others when reason or circumstance demand it, is a sign of pride and obstinacy.

CHAPTER 10

Of Avoiding Superfluity in Words

FLEE the press and tumult of the world as much as thou canst, for talk about worldly affairs is a great hindrance even if it be indulged in with sincere intention; for thus are we quickly corrupted and led captive by vanity. I have many times had cause to wish that I had kept silent when in the company of men. Why do we so willingly give utterance to idle talk one with another, when we so seldom return to the silence without hurt of conscience? The reason is, that by discoursing thus we hope to receive consolation from one another; and desire to unburden our hearts that are weighed down with conflicting thoughts. And, too, we are very willing to talk and think of the things we most love or desire, or of those which we feel to be most contrary and troublesome.

But alas! oftentimes vainly and unfruitfully; for this outward comfort can be a great hindrance to inward and divine consolation. Therefore we must watch and pray, that our time pass not idly away. If it be permissible and expedient for thee to speak, speak those things that may edify. Evil habits and the neglect of our own virtue contributeth much to ill-considered speech. Nevertheless devout discourses on spiritual things do greatly further our spiritual progress, especially when persons of like mind and spirit are of one fellowship in God.

CHAPTER II

Of the Obtaining of Peace, and Zealous Desire of Progress in Grace

If we busied ourselves less with the words and deeds of other men, and with things with which we have nothing to do, we should enjoy much peace. How can he abide long in peace who entangleth himself in the cares of others, who seeketh occasions abroad, and who seldom ponders his condition in his heart. Blessèd are they who are single-hearted, for they shall enjoy much peace.

Why were some of the Saints so perfect and contemplative? Because they laboured to mortify themselves wholly to all earthly desires; therefore could they with their whole heart stay themselves upon God, and remain free in spirit. We are too much dominated by our passions and too solicitous about transitory things. Seldom do we overcome even one vice completely, nor are we inflamed with a fervent desire for daily progress; therefore we remain lukewarm an[illegible]inspired.

If we were perfectly dead to self and not embroiled in the evil which is in ourselves, then should we be able to taste of divine things and to have experience of heavenly contemplation. The greatest, nay the whole impediment, is that we are the victims of our passions and lusts, and make no endeavour to enter upon that path of perfection which the Saints have trod before us. When any small adversity befalleth us, we are too quickly discouraged, too prone to seek human consolation.

If, like valiant men, we strove to stand firm in battle, verily we should see descending upon us help from the Lord of Heaven. For He who giveth us occasion to fight, to the end that we may obtain the victory, is ever ready to succour those that fight manfully, putting their trust in His grace. If we esteem our progress in religious life to consist only in some exterior observances, our devotion will be quickly at an end. Let us lay the axe to the root, that, being purged of our passions, we may find rest for our souls.

If every year we were to succeed in uprooting but one vice, we should soon become perfect men. Alas! how often do we perceive the contrary: that we were better and purer at the beginning of our conversion than after many years of our profession. Our zeal and progress should increase daily; but now it is accounted a great thing if a man retain but some part of his first fervour. If, at the beginning, we would do a little violence to ourselves, then should we be able thereafter to perform all things with ease and delight.

It is hard to forgo that to which we are accustomed, and harder still to conquer the will. But if thou fail to overcome small and easy things, how wilt thou overcome hard things? Resist thine evil inclinations in the beginning, and unlearn thine evil habits, lest perhaps little by little they bring thee greater trials. Oh, if thou didst but consider how much inward peace unto thyself, and joy unto others, thou shouldst procure by the exercise of true humility and earnest endeavour, thou wouldst be more solicitous for thy spiritual progress!

CHAPTER 12

Of Profiting from Adversity

It is good that at times we are called upon to bear adversities and crosses, for these oftentimes induce a man to re-enter his own heart, and there he perceives himself to be an exile, and that he ought not to place his trust in the things of this world. Furthermore it is a good thing that we are sometimes contradicted and suffer a diminution of our own conceit; that men should at times misjudge and think ill of us even when we do well and our intentions are beyond reproach. For such slights frequently help us to attain humility and defend us from vain glory: for, when outwardly we be contemned by men, or when they deny us the credit we think to be our due, we turn to God for our inward witness.

Therefore a man should be so completely immersed in God that he is able to dispense with most of the comforts and consolations of men. When a man of good will is afflicted, tempted, or troubled with evil thoughts, he understandeth better what great need he hath of God, and perceiveth that without Him he can do no good thing. Then also, by reason of the miseries he suffereth, he sorroweth, lamenteth and resorteth to prayer. Then is he weary of living and longeth that death should come, that he might be dissolved and be with Christ. Then also he knoweth beyond all doubt that perfect security and fulness of peace are not to be had in this world.

CHAPTER 13

Of Resisting Temptations

So long as we live in this world, we cannot avoid trial and temptation. Whence it is written in Job, *The life of man upon earth is a warfare.* Everyone therefore ought to be solicitous about his temptations, and to watch and pray lest the enemy find an advantage to deceive him; for Satan never sleepeth, but goeth about seeking whom he may devour. No man is so perfect or so holy that he is never tempted, and none are wholly exempt from temptations.

Nevertheless, troublesome and grievous though they be, temptations are often very profitable to us, for by them a man is humbled, purified and instructed. All the Saints passed through much tribulation and temptation and profited thereby; and they that could not w[illegible]and temptation became reprobate and fell away. Th[illegible] no Order so holy, no place, however secluded, which is without temptation or adversity.

Whilst in this world, no man is altogether safe from temptations, for these have their roots in ourselves, who are born with an inclination to evil. When one trial or temptation goeth, another cometh; and we shall ever have something to suffer, for we are fallen from the state of our felicity. Many who seek to flee temptations, do but fall the more grievously into them. Flight alone will not bring us victory. Only by patience and true humility can we become stronger than our adversary.

He that avoideth temptation outwardly only, and doth not pluck it up by the root, shall profit little; nay, temptations will the sooner spring up in him, and he will find himself in a worse state than before. Little by little, by patience and longsuffering, and with the help of God, thou wilt overcome them better than by thine own effort and importunity. Seek counsel more often in temptation; and be not hard on him that is tempted, but comfort and console him, as thou wouldst wish to be done unto thyself. The beginning of all evil temptation is inconstancy of heart and too little confidence in God. As a ship without a rudder is tossed to and fro by the waves, so the man who is remiss and holdeth not steadfastly to his purpose, is tempted in many ways. Fire trieth iron, and temptation the just man. Oftentimes we know not what we are able to do, but temptation revealeth what we are. We must be especially vigilant at the onset of temptation, for the enemy is more easily overcome [illegible] he be refused entrance to the door of the mind, and [illegible]ted on the threshold at his first knock. Hence one hath written: *Resist at the beginning; if thou delayest, evils gather strength, and remedy is sought too late.* For first there cometh into the mind an evil thought; then a strong imagination thereof; then a sense of delight; then a perverse impulse and assenting. And so, little by little, our evil adversary, if he be not resisted in the beginning, gaineth complete entrance. The longer a man deferreth resisting, so much the weaker he becometh every day, while the enemy waxeth the stronger against him.

Some suffer great temptations in the beginning of their conversion; others in the end, and some are all their life much troubled. Some, again, are but slightly tempted; according to the wisdom and equity of the ordinance of God, Who weigheth the state and merit of every man, and preordaineth all things for the salvation of His chosen children.

We ought not, therefore, to despair when we are tempted, but the more fervently to pray God that he will vouchsafe to help us in every tribulation; *Who surely*, as St. Paul saith, *will give with the temptation such issue, that we may be able to bear it*. Let us therefore humble our souls under the hand of God in all our trials and temptations, for He will save and exalt the humble in spirit.

Temptations and afflictions determine a man's progress in the things of the spirit; for in overcoming them he gaineth merit, and the more brightly doth his virtue shine forth. It is no great thing if a man be devout and fervent when he suffereth no affliction; but if in time of adversity he bear himself patiently, he hath h[illegible]f great progress. Some men are preserved from gre[illegible]mptations, but readily succumb to the small temptations of every day; to the end that, being thus humbled, and knowing themselves to be feeble in small trials, they may never presume to trust themselves in great trials.

CHAPTER 14

Of Avoiding Rash Judgment

TURN thine eyes unto thyself, and take heed that thou judge not the actions of other men. For in judging others a man laboureth in vain, is often mistaken, and readily falleth into sin; but in judging and examining himself, he cannot but labour profitably. Often when we judge a thing we are swayed by personal feeling; and selfish desires conspire to rob us of true judgment. Were God Himself the one and only object of our desire, we should not be so easily vexed by resistance to our own opinions.

But oftentimes there lurketh within, or occurreth from without, something that lureth us to follow it. Many unconsciously serve themselves in what they do, though they know it not. They seem also to enjoy peace of mind when things are done in accordance with their will and pleasure; but should things fall out otherwise, they straightway become indignant and sad. Diversity of judgments and opinions oftentimes giveth rise to dissentions between friends and fellow-citizens, and even between religious and devout persons.

Old habits [illegible] and are hard to break, and no man is willingly led beyond that which he himself can see. If thou lean rather more upon thine own reason and industry than upon the virtue of submission to Jesus Christ, thou shalt wait long for spiritual illumination; for it is the will of God that we become perfectly subject unto Him, and, being inflamed with His love, transcend the narrow limits of human reason.

CHAPTER 15

Of Works Inspired by Love

Do no evil for any worldly thing, nor for the love of another; but, for the benefit of one that standeth in need, a good work may sometimes, without scruple, be left undone in order that another be undertaken. For thus the good work is not lost, but is changed into something better. Without love the outward work profiteth nothing; but whatever is done for love, be it ever so small and contemptible in the eyes of the world, becometh wholly fruitful. For God weigheth not the work that a man doeth, but the love that inspireth it. He doeth much that loveth much. He doeth much that doeth well whatsoever he hath to do. He doeth well that serveth the community rather than his own interests. Oftentimes what seemeth to be an act of love hath its roots in worldly things; for natural inclination, self-will, hope of reward, and self-interest are seldom entirely absent from [illegible] thoughts.

He that hath true and perfect love [illegible]eth himself in nothing; his one desire is that God be glorified and exalted in all things. He also envieth none, for he seeketh nothing for himself; neither doth he rejoice in himself, but desireth above all things to find happiness and peace in the enjoyment of God. He ascribeth unto man nothing that is good, but referreth it wholly unto God, the Fountainhead of all that exists, and in Whom, as perfected souls, all the Saints do rest. Oh, if in his heart man had but one spark of true love, he would discern that all earthly things are full of vanity!

CHAPTER 16

Of Forbearance with the Defects of Others

WHATSOEVER a man cannot amend in himself or in others, he ought to bear patiently until God ordain things otherwise. Think, and perhaps thou wilt perceive that it is ordained as a test of thy patience, without which merit is of little worth. Nevertheless when thou hast such impediments, thou oughtest to pray that God will vouchsafe to help thee, and that thou mayest bear them with serenity.

If one that hath been once or twice admonished will not yield, contend not with him, but commit all to God, that His will may be done, for He alone knoweth how to turn evil into good, that His Name may be honoured in all His servants. Endeavour to be patient and endure with good grace the defects and infirmities of others, whatsoever they may be; for thou also hast many failings which are a trial to others. If thou canst not mould thyself as thou wouldst wish, how canst thou hope to find perfection in others? We would like to have others perfect, yet we amend not our own faults; we would have others severely corrected, but we ourselves resent correction. We are displeased at and would restrict the freedom of others, yet will not have our own desires denied us. We would have others bound by rules and ordinances, but we ourselves will not suffer restraint.

How seldom do we weigh our neighbour in the same balance with ourselves! If all men were perfect, what then should we have to endure from others for the sake of God? But God hath ordained it otherwise, that we may learn to bear one another's burdens; for no man is without fault; no man but hath his burden; no man is sufficient unto himself; no man is wise enough of himself. Therefore we ought to bear with one another. Adversity alone bringeth to light the true virtue and strength of every man. For such occasions do not of themselves weaken a man, but reveal his true nature.

CHAPTER 17

Of the Monastic Life

THOU must learn to subjugate thyself in many ways if thou wouldst live in peace and concord with others. It is no small thing to dwell in a religious community or congregation without strife, and to persevere therein faithfully unto thy life's end. Blessèd is he that hath lived thus well, and died thus happily. If thou wouldst persevere in grace and grow therein, esteem thyself an exile and a pilgrim upon the earth. If thou wouldst live a religious life, thou must be content to be made a fool for Christ's sake. Habit and tonsure alone availeth little; but change of heart and the complete mortification of the passions, make a truly religious man.

Seek God only and the salvation of thy soul; all else is tribulation and sorrow. He that endeavoureth to be the least, and subject to all, shall find lasting peace. Thou hast come to serve, not to rule. Well thou knowest that thou wast called to suffer and to labour, not to live at ease and to spend thy time in idle talk. Here men are tried as gold in the furnace. Here no man can abide, unless he be ready to humble himself with his whole heart for the love of God.

CHAPTER 18

Of the Examples of the Holy Fathers

CONSIDER the spirited example of the holy Fathers, in whom shone true religion and perfection, and thou shalt see that, by contrast, we accomplish little or nothing. Alas! what are our lives compared with theirs! The Saints and friends of Christ served the Lord in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, in labour and weariness, in vigils and fastings, in prayer and holy meditations, in untold persecutions and reproaches.

O, how many and grievous were the tribulations suffered by Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, Virgins, and all who strove to follow in the footsteps of Christ! For they hated their lives in this world, that they might keep them unto life eternal. O, how strict and selfless the life led by those holy Fathers in the wilderness! How long and grievous the temptations they endured! How often were they assaulted by the enemy! How frequent and fervent the prayers they offered up to God! How rigorous their abstinences! How great their zeal and fervour for spiritual progress! How fierce their combat to overcome all vices! With what purity and one-pointedness held they to God! Their days were spent in labour, and their nights were largely devoted to prayer: yea, even when they laboured, they ceased not from inward prayer.

Their whole time was spent fruitfully; every hour seemed short in the service of God; and by reason of the great delight they found in contemplation, they forgot the need for bodily refreshment. They renounced riches, dignities, honours, friends and kinsfolk; they desired nothing which appertained to world; they partook only of what was necessary for the sustenance of life; they were reluctant to serve the body even in necessity. They were poor in earthly things, but exceeding rich in grace and all virtues. Outwardly they suffered want but inwardly they were refreshed with divine grace and consolation.

To the world they were aliens, but to God they were beloved and familiar friends. To themselves they seemed nothing, and were despised of the world; but in the eyes of God they were precious and elect. Theirs was a true humility. They lived in simple obedience and walked in love and patience; therefore they progressed daily in Spirit, and attained great favour in God's sight. They were given for an example to all the Religious; thus should they the more inspire us to strive courageously to live according to the things of the spirit; whereas lukewarm exemplars do but make us remiss and lax.

O, how great was the fervour of all religious persons when first their holy institutions were founded! How great their devotion to prayer! Their zeal for virtue! How strict their discipline! What great reverence and obedience, under the Rule of the Superior flourished in them all! The records of their lives and example testify that they were indeed holy and perfect men, who fought valiantly and overcame the world. Now he who transgresses not, and who endureth with patience whatever he hath undertaken or may befall, is accounted great!

O, the lassitude and negligence of the times! that our first fervour doth quickly decline and that indifference and lukewarmness of spirit hath brought us to such a pass that we even tire of living. Pray God that the desire to grow in virtue be not wholly dormant in thee; thou who hast before thee so many examples of devout men.

Chapter 19

Of the Exercise of a Good Religious

THE life of a good Religious ought to shine with all manner of virtues, for he ought to be inwardly such as he outwardly seemeth to men. There ought indeed to be more virtue within than is perceived without, for God, to whom we owe sovereign worship wheresoever we may be, seeth all hearts; therefore we ought to walk in purity before him as doth the Angels. We ought daily to renew our intention and to rouse ourselves to great fervour, as though it were the first day of our conversion, and to say: *Help me, O Lord God, in my good purpose, and in Thy holy service; and grant me this day the perfect beginning, for that which I have done hitherto is as naught.*

According to our earnestness of purpose so shall be our spiritual progress; and he that would advance in virtue hath need of great diligence. The man of strong purpose may often fail, but what shall befall him that seldom or never spurreth himself to action? Nevertheless in divers ways we may fail in our purpose; and even, though our falling off be slight, the omission of our exercises causes hindrance to our souls. The resolution [illegible] righteous men depends not upon their own wisdom but upon the grace of God, in Whom, in whatsoever they do, they put their trust. For man proposeth, but God disposeth; neither is any man sufficient unto himself.

If, either for some act of piety or brotherly service, a regular exercise be sometimes omitted, it can soon be resumed again. But if, through negligence or weariness of mind or body, we lightly forsake our duties, such conduct is reprobate and hurtful to our souls. However hard we strive, we shall still fail all too easily in many things.

Nevertheless we must always hold fast to our purpose, especially against those failings which we find hardest to overcome. We must examine diligently and set in order both our inner and outer life, for both are necessary to our spiritual advancement.

If thou find it hard to continually recollect thyself, yet do it sometimes, and at least once a day, namely in the morning or in the evening. At morn, plan thy good works; at eventide, examine thyself; how thou hast behaved in deed, word and thought; for by these, peradventure, thou hast oftentimes offended both God and thy neighbour. Gird up thy loins like a man against the assaults of Satan; restrain thine appetite, and thou wilt be the better able to subdue all unruly desires of the flesh. Never be wholly idle; but either reading or writing, or praying or meditating, or endeavouring something for the common good. Nevertheless bodily exercises should only be undertaken with discretion, and ought not to be practised by all men alike.

The less co[illegible] spiritual exercises are not to be done in public; su[illegible]e practised only in seclusion. Nevertheless charge thyself that thou perform those which are for the common good rather than those which are personal to thyself. And having fully and faithfully accomplished all that thou art bound and enjoined to do, betake thee to thine own devotions only if thou hast time to spare. The same spiritual exercise is not equally suitable for all. One kind is more useful for this person, another for that. Moreover many exercises are designed for special times and seasons; some being set to holy days, others to common days. Some we should use in the hour of temptation; others in times of peace and quiet. Some we should bring to mind when we are sad; others when we rejoice in the Lord.

During the great Festivals, spiritual exercises ought to be practised with redoubled zeal, and the help of the Saints sought even more fervently. From one Festival to another we should resolve and endeavour to live as though we were about to depart from this world and come to the Eternal Festival. Therefore at holy seasons we ought carefully to prepare ourselves to live more devoutly, and to keep every observance more strictly, as though we were soon to receive from the hand of God himself, the reward of our labours.

And if this reward be deferred, let us account ourselves as yet unready, and unworthy to receive so great a glory; the which will be revealed unto us in God's good time. Therefore let us endeavour to truly prepare ourselves for our departure from this world. *Blessèd is that servant*, sayeth

St. Luke the Evangelist, *whom his Lord when He cometh, shall find watching. Verily, I say unto y[illegible] shall make him ruler over all His goods.*

CHAPTER 20

Of the Love of Solitude and Silence

RETIRE into thyself at all convenient times, and meditate often upon the loving-kindness of God. Be not motivated by desire or curiosity, but read that which will inspire thy heart with devotion, rather than that which will satisfy thy mind. If thou withdraw thyself from needless talk, and from gadding idly, and resist hearkening to gossip and rumours, thou wilt find time enough for spiritual meditation. The greatest Saints avoided the society of man, choosing rather to live unto God in solitude. One hath said: *As often as I have been among men, I returned a lesser man.* This we find by experience when we talk long together. It is much better to remain silent than to speak to excess, and it is easier for a man to abide privately at home, than it is to keep to himself when in public. Therefore he who would attain to inward and spiritual things must withdraw from the multitude, as did Jesus. Only he that loveth seclusion may safely appear abroad without fear of hurt to his soul. No man speaketh with safety, save he that would fain keep silent. No man is surely above, save he that would gladly be beneath. No man doth safely command, save he that hath learned to obey. No man rejoiceth safely, save he who hath within him the testimony of a good conscience.

Nevertheless [illegible] security of the Saints was founded in the fear of God, nor, though they shone with grace and great virtue, were they any less anxious and humble in themselves. But the security of depraved persons ariseth from pride and presumption, and in the end it turneth to self-deception. Never promise thyself security in this world, even though thou art a good monk or a devout hermit.

Oftentimes those who stand highest in the estimation of men suffer grievously because of too great self-confidence. Therefore for many it is more profitable that they be not yet free from temptation, and are often tempted; lest, thinking themselves to be secure, they become puffed-up with pride, and give themselves too freely to wordly consolations. O how good a conscience would he keep, who never sought after transitory joys, nor ever entangled himself with the things of the world! And if he scorneth temporal things and thinketh only upon divine things, placing his whole hope in God, what great peace and quietude doth he enjoy.

No man is worthy of heavenly comfort save he who diligently exercises himself in holy compunction. If thou desirest true contrition of heart, enter into thy secret chamber and shut out the tumult of the world; as it is written: *In your chambers be ye repentant.* Thou wilt find there that which abroad thou canst so easily lose. Well-continued meditation in thy cell maketh it a sweet place; but if thou comest not often, weariness is engendered. If in the beginning of thy religious life thou art content to remain in thy cell and to keep it well, it will afterwards be to thee a dear and well-beloved friend, and a most pleasant solace.

It is in silence and quietude that the devout soul maketh progress and learneth the hidden mysteries of Holy Scripture: there she findeth floods of tears wherein each night she may wash and be cleansed. For the more she withdraweth from the clamour of the world, the more she becometh at one with her Creator. God and His holy Angels draweth near unto him who withdraweth himself from his acquaintances and friends. It is better that a man live in seclusion, watchful of his soul's welfare, than that he seek to work miracles in the world. It is therefore commendable that a Religious go seldom abroad, and be undesirous to see, or be seen of, men.

Why dost thou crave to see that which it is unlawful for thee to have? The world passeth away and the lust thereof. Our sensual desires urge us to roam abroad; but when the hour is past, what carriest thou home with thee save a burdened conscience and a sorrowful heart? All too often a merry outgoing bringeth a sad homecoming; and a gay evening maketh a rueful morning. So every fleshly joy entereth pleasantly, but in the end it biteth and slayeth. What mayest thou see elsewhere that thou mayest not see here? Behold the heavens, and the earth, and all the elements; for of these all things are created.

What canst thou see anywhere under the sun that can endure for long? Peradventure thou thinkest to satisfy thyself. Alas, thou canst never attain it! And if thou wert to see everything in existence laid out before thee, what would such an vision profit thee? Lift up thine eyes to

God on high, and ask forgiveness for thy sins and weaknesses; leave vain things to the vain, and take heed of those things that God hath commandeth thee. Shut thy door upon evil and call unto thee Jesus, thy Belovèd. Dwell with Him in thy cell, for thou shalt not find elsewhere such great peace. Hadst thou never left it, never gone abroad and hearkened to the talk of men, thou wouldst the better have preserved thy peace of mind. But if thou be drawn to take delight in the allurements of the world, it follows thou must suffer some disquietude of heart.

CHAPTER 21

Of Contrition of Heart

If thou wouldst progress in the things of the spirit, keep thee in the fear of God, discipline thy mind and senses, and yield not to unbecoming mirth. Give thyself rather to compunction of heart, and thou shalt find true devotion. Compunction openeth the way to many things which laxity is wont quickly to destroy. The wonder is that one who considereth his state of exile and the many perils which threaten his soul, can ever joy in this life.

Through levity of heart and negligence of our failings, we become insensible of the sorrows and afflictions of the soul; and oftentimes we laugh vainly when we have just cause for tears. There is no true liberty, no real joy, save in the fear of God and a good conscience. Happy is he who hath power to cast off every hindering distraction, and to bring himself to one purpose, that of holy compunction. Happy is he who putteth from [illegible] all that may defile or grieve his conscience. Resist manfully; habit is overcome by habit. Meddle not in the affairs of others, and they likewise wilt not hinder thee in thine.

Have no desire to busy thyself with other men, nor allow thyself to become entangled in the affairs of thy superiors. Examine and admonish thyself, before thou takest upon thyself the right to admonish those thou lovest best. Grieve not if men hold thee not in favour; but grieve rather that thou dost not behave thyself well and circumspectly, as becometh a servant of God and a devout Religious. It is oftentimes better and safer that a man should have few comforts in this life, and especially such as gratify the flesh. If we seldom or never experience divine consolation, the fault is ours, for we neither seek compunction of heart, nor do we wholly renounce the vain and outward comforts of the world. Therefore acknowledge thyself to be unworthy of heavenly consolation, and deserving of much tribulation. When a man hath perfect contrition, the whole world is burdensome and bitter unto him. A good man findeth abundant cause for sorrow and tears; for whether he considereth his own condition or that of his neighbour, he perceiveth that none can escape tribulation. And the more strictly a man weigheth himself, the more cause he findeth for sorrow. Our sins and vices are truly causes for sorrow and inward compunction; yet so enwrapt are we in evil that we are seldom able to apply ourselves to heavenly things.

Wert thou to think more often of thy death than thou dost of a long life, doubtless thou wouldst be more zealous to amend th[illegible] If also thou didst ponder in thy heart the pains of he[illegible] and of purgatory, thou wouldst willingly suffer pain, labour and sorrow, dreading no manner of hardship, however rigorous. But because we close the door of the heart to such thoughts, and cling to the things that delight us, we therefore remain cold and indifferent to religion.

Oftentimes it is this very lack of the Spirit which maketh our miserable body to rebel so easily. Pray therefore unto the Lord with all humility, that He vouchsafe to grant thee the spirit of compunction, and say with the Prophet: *Feed me, O Lord, with the bread of tears, and give me plenteousness of tears to drink.*

CHAPTER 22

Of the Consideration of Human Misery

WHERESOEVER thou be, and whithersoever thou turnest, thou art wretched unless thou turn thyself to God. Why art thou troubled when things go not as thou willest or desirest? Who is there that hath all things according to his will? Neither I, nor thou, nor any man upon earth. No man in this world is free from anxiety and tribulation, be he King or Pope. Who, then, is in the happiest state? Surely, he that is able to suffer anything for the love of God.

Many weak and foolish persons say: "Behold! how good a life that man hath; how rich, how great, how powerful, how exalted he is." But lift up thine eyes to the riches of Heaven, and thou shalt see that all such temporal things are as nothing. They are very uncertain, and impose burdens which cause great uneasiness of mind; for they are never possessed without anxiety and fear. Man's happiness doth not consist in an abundance of temporal goods; a modest portion sufficeth for his needs. Verily, it is a misery to live upon the earth. The more a man striveth to live the life of the spirit, the more bitter doth this present life become to him; for he feeleth more intensely, and perceiveth more clearly the defects of man's corruption. For to eat and drink, to wake and sleep, to rest and to labour, and to be subject to the other necessities of nature, is truly great misery and affliction to the devout man, who would fain be released from bondage to sin.

The inward man is sorely vexed by bodily necessities in this world. Wherefore the Prophet prayeth devoutly that he may be free from them, saying, *From my necessities deliver me, O Lord!* But woe to them that know not their own misery; and a greater woe to them that love this miserable and corruptible life! For some there be that so cling to it, that, although by labour or by begging they can scarce obtain the bare necessities, yet, could they but live here for ever, they would care nothing for the Kingdom of Heaven.

O how senseless are these men, how lost to true belief, who are so deeply immersed in carnal things that they are wholly insensible of heavenly things! Unhappy wretches! They shall in the end feel grievously how vile and worthless was that which they loved so ardently. But the Saints of God, and all devout friends of Christ, renounced the things of the flesh, and those by which worldly men sought to prosper; their whole hope and earnest intention being directed to things eternal. Their entire being was lifted upward to things invisible and everlasting, lest by love of things visible they might be ensnared by the evils of the world.

O, my brother, hold fast to thy hope of making progress in spiritual things; now is the day and the hour; why then defer thy good purpose till the morrow? Arise, begin this very instant, and say: *Now is the time to act; now is the time to fight; now is the time to amend.* When thou art troubled and afflicted, then is the time to win great merit. Thou must pass through fire and water ere thou come to the place of refreshment, but, unless thou master thine own will, thou wilt never overcome thy vices. So long as we inhabit this frail body, we can never be without sin, or live without weariness and pain. We would gladly have rest and freedom from all misery, but, having lost our innocence by sin, we have also lost our true blessedness. Therefore it becometh us to have patience and to await God's mercy, till this iniquity be overpast, and mortality be swallowed up in life!

O how great is human frailty, which is ever prone to evil! Today thou art shriven of thy sins, and tomorrow thou committest them once more! Presently, thou art resolved to set a watch upon thy conduct, yet within the hour thou behavest as though thy resolution had never been made! Good cause have we therefore to be humble, and never to have any high opinion of ourselves, since we are so frail and vacillating. Furthermore [illegible] may quickly lose by our own negligence that which, after long striving, we have barely attained by virtue of God's grace.

What will become of us in the end, if our zeal so quickly wax lukewarm? Woe be unto us, who so soon incline to laxity, as if peace and safety were already assured; when as yet there appeareth no sign of true holiness in our lives! How profitable it would be for us were we to again become as good novices, so that, being instructed anew in the Way of Christ, there might be some hope of our future amendment, and of our advancement in things spiritual.

Chapter 23

Of Meditation on Death

TODAY a man is, and tomorrow he appeareth not. Full soon shall this be fulfilled in thee; look then to thy soul's salvation. And when a man is out of sight, soon also he passeth out of mind. O the dullness and hardness of the human heart, that dwelleth only upon things present, rather than upon those to come! Thou oughtest to order all thy thoughts and actions as though thou wert soon to die. If thou hadst a good conscience, death would hold no terrors for thee; moreover it is better to renounce sin than to flee death. If thou be not ready to meet death to day, how wilt thou be so tomorrow? Tomorrow is uncertain; think not that it is foreordained.

What availeth it to live long if we so little amend our ways? Alas! [illegible] of days doth often add to our sins and diminish our virtues! Would to God that we had lived well in this world for even one day! Many there are who recount the years since their conversion, yet how meagre are the fruits of their amendment. If it be accounted dreadful to die, peradventure it is more perilous to live long. Blessèd is he that is ever mindful of the hour of his death, and daily disposeth himself to that end. Hast thou seen another man die? If so, take heed that thou also must travel the same road.

When it is morning take thought that thou mayest die before eventide; and when evening is come, presume not to promise thyself another day. Be thou, therefore, always in readiness, and so order thy life that death may never find thee unprepared. Many die suddenly and without warning, for at an hour when we think not the Son of Man will come. When that last hour cometh, thou wilt begin to suffer disquiet for thy past life, and thou shalt greatly sorrow that thou hast been so remiss and negligent.

Blessed is he that striveth to be such in this life as he desireth to be found at the hour of his death! So that we may die happily, then, let us put our trust in these precepts: a perfect contempt of the world; a fervent desire to grow in virtue; a love of discipline; the practice of penance; promptitude in obedience; self-denial, and the patience to bear all manner of adversities for the love of Christ. Whilst thou art in health thou canst do much good; but when sickness comes, I know not what thou wilt be able to do. Few there be that are reformed by sickness, and they that go much on pilgrimage seldom acquire holiness thereby.

Put not thy trust in friends and kindr[illegible]ther, for this cause, be thou dilatory in seeking thy [illegible]l's salavation, for men will forget thee sooner than thou dost think. It is better to make provision now, and to acquire virtue by thine own efforts, than to rely upon the help of others. If thou art not solicitous for thyself now, who will be solicitous for thee hereafter? The present is most precious; now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation. Alas! that thou spendest not thy time more profitably, for then thou wouldst gain eternal life hereafter. The time will come when thou shalt crave but one day, yea one hour, in which to amend; and thou knowest not whether it will be granted thee.

O belovèd soul, from what great fear mightest thou free thyself, from what great peril mightest thou deliver thyself, if only thou wouldst live in holiness and be ever mindful of death! Strive to live now so that at the hour of death thou mayest rejoice and fear not. Learn now to die to the world, that thou mayest begin to live with Christ. Learn now to despise all earthly things, that, when death calls, thou mayest go freely to Christ. Discipline now thy body by penance, that thou mayest rest firm in the hope of salvation.

O foolish man, why dost thou think to live long when thou canst not be certain of one day? How many have thus deceived themselves and, against all hope, have been suddenly snatched away! How often hast thou heard men say: such an man is slain in battle; another drowned; another, falling from some high place, hath broken his neck.

Such an one died when eating, another when playing. Some perish by fire, some by the sword, some by illness, some are slain by robbers. The end of all is death, and man's life passeth away suddenly as a shadow.

Who will remember thee when thou art dead? and who will pray for thee? Do, do now, belovèd soul, whatsoever thou art able to do; for thou knowest not the hour of thy death, nor what shall befall thee thereafter. Whilst thou hast time, gather unto thyself the riches of life everlasting. Think only of the salvation of thy soul; care only for the things which are of God. Make friends now with the Saints of God by honouring them and following their example, that, when this present life is over, they may receive thee into thy everlasting habitation.

Look upon thyself as a stranger and pilgrim upon the earth, and as one to whom the affairs of this world do nothing pertain. Keep thy heart free and lift it up to God, for here thou hast no abiding city. Thither direct thy daily prayers and longings, thy sighs and tears, that when death comes, thy soul may be found worthy to be brought into the presence of thy Lord. Amen.

CHAPTER 24

Of Judgment, and the Punishment of Sinners

IN all things remember thy end, and how thou shalt stand before that righteous Judge, from Whom nothing is hid. He is not pacified with gifts, nor doth he accept excuses, but will judge thee according to right and equity. O thou most wretched and foolish sinner, who sometimes quailest before the countenance of an angry man, how wilt thou answer God, who knoweth all thy wickedness? Why dost thou not prepare thyself against the Day of Judgment, when none can be excused, none defended by another, but each must answer for himself alone? Thy labours are now fruitful, thy tears acceptable, thy groans audible; now thy sorrow pacifieth and cleanseth the soul.

He hath a great and wholesome purgatory, who, though he receive injuries, yet beareth them patiently, and concerneth himself more over another's malice, than over his own wrong; who gladly prayeth for his enemies, and wholeheartedly forgiveth them their trespasses; who delayeth not to ask forgiveness of whomsoever he hath offended; who is sooner moved to compassion than to anger; who often castigateth himself, and striveth to bring the flesh wholly into subjection to the spirit. It is better to purge away thy sins and root out thy vices now, than to suffer purgation for them hereafter. Verily we do but deceive ourselves by an inordinate love of the flesh. What wilt that infernal fire feed upon if not thy sins? The more thou sparest thyself now, the more thou followest the flesh, the more grievous will be thy punishment hereafter; for thou art laying up more fuel for the flames.

In whatsoever things a man hath sinned, in the same shall he be severely punished. There will the slothful be prodded on with burning goads, and the gluttonous tormented with dire hunger and thirst. There will the lovers of luxury and pleasure be plunged in burning pitch and fulsome brimstone. There will the envious howl in anguish like mad dogs, where every vice will have its corresponding torment. There the proud will be filled with confusion, and the avaricious feel the pinch of dire penury. There one hour of pain will be more grievous than a hundred years of the sharpest penance here. There is no rest there, no consolation for the damned; nor, as here, is it given to men to have some intermission of their labours, and enjoy the consolation of their friends.

Therefore now is the time to be solicitous and sorrowful because of thy sins, that at the Day of Judgment thou mayest stand secure in the company of the blest. For then shall the righteous with great boldness stand against such as have straitened and oppressed them. Then will he stand to judge, who now doth humbly submit himself to the judgments of others. Then will the poor and humble have great confidence, but the proud will be encompassed about with fear on every side. Then will it appear that he who learned for Christ's sake to be despised and counted a fool, was indeed wise in this world. Then will every affliction patiently endured for Christ delight us, and the mouth of iniquity will be stopped. Then will the devout rejoice, and the profane will sorrow. Then will the disciplined body rejoice more than if it had taken part in all pleasures and delights. Then will the poor habit shine gloriously, and the fine robe seem tarnished. Then will the lowly cottage be more commended than the gilded palace. Then will steadfast patience avail us more than the sovereignty of the world. Then will simple obedience be exalted above all worldly deceit.

Then will a good and pure conscience gladden a man more than profound philosophy. Then [illegible] the contempt of riches far outweigh all the treasures of [illegible] earth. Then wilt thou be more comforted of devout prayer than of delicate food. Then wilt thou joy more in well kept silence, than in inordinate speech. Then wilt good works avail thee more, than many fair words. Then wilt a strict life and hard penance please more than all the delights of the world.

Accustom thyself now to suffer in small things, that thou mayest then be delivered from more grievous pains. Prove here what thou canst endure hereafter. If now thou canst endure so little, how then wilt thou be able to endure eternal torments? If now a little suffering make thee so impatient, what of Hell hereafter. Assuredly thou canst not have both joys; to revel in the delights of this world, and reign with Christ hereafter.

If thou hast lived till this very day in full enjoyment of the honours and pleasures of the world, what would all that avail thee wert thou to die this instant? All therefore is vanity, save to love God and to serve Him only. For he that loveth God with all his heart dreadeth neither death nor punishment, nor judgment, nor Hell; for perfect love giveth sure access to God. What wonder is it that he who still delighteth in sin dreadeth death and judgment? Wherefore it is good that, if as yet love be not strong enough to withhold thee from evil, the fear of Hell restrain thee. For he that putteth from him the fear of God can never continue long in good estate, but falleth quickly into the snares of the devil.

CHAPTER 25

Of the Zealous Amending of our Whole Life

Be watchful and diligent in the service of God. Think oftentimes on why thou camest hither, and why thou hast forsaken the world. Was it not that thou mightest live to God, and become a spiritual man? Wherefore be fervent in spirit, and thou shalt soon reap the reward of thy labours; then shall neither fear nor sorrow afflict thee. Labour but a little now and thou shalt find great peace; yea, joy everlasting. If thou continue faithful and fervent in well doing, assuredly God will be faithful, and will richly reward thee. Hold fast to the good hope that thou wilt obtain the Crown of victory; but be not over-confident of this, lest thou wax indolent or proud.

There was once a man who, in great anxiety of mind, often wavering between fear and hope, and being encumbered with grief, did humbly prostrate himself in church before a certain altar, and pondering these things in his mind, said: "If only I could know that I should persevere." And presently he heard in his heart the divine answer: "And if thou didst know this, what wouldst thou do? Do now what thou wouldst do then, and thou shalt rest secure." And being thus comforted and strengthened, he committed himself wholly to the will of God, and his anxieties and vacillations were ended; furthermore he ceased thereafter to search and to be curious to know what should befall him; but rather studied to understand the acceptable and perfect will of God when entering upon or performing every good work. *Hope in the Lord, an[illegible]d,* sayeth the Prophet, *and dwell in the land, and thou [illegible]t be fed in the riches thereof.*

One thing in particular deterreth many from spiritua progress and the diligent amendment of their lives; namely a dread of the difficult and arduous nature of the combat. Those who endeavour most manfully to overcome the very things that are most grievous and contrary unto them, progress beyond others in virtue. For the more a man conquereth himself and subjugateth his desires to the life of the Spirit, the more he profiteth and meriteth God's more abundant grace. Howbeit the evils to be overcome and mortified are not the same for all. Nevertheless a zealous and diligent man, though he have stronger passions to subdue, will progress more than another of a more temperate disposition, but who is less fervent in the pursuit of virtue. Two things especially help greatly towards our amendment; namely, the purposeful withdrawal of ourselves from these evils to which by nature we are most viciously inclined; and to labour zealously for those virtues of which we stand most in need. Be watchful also to continuously avoid and to subjugate in thyself the things which most displease thee in others. Gather some profit to thy soul wheresoever thou may be, and if thou seest or hearest of, the good example of others, bestir thyself to the imitation thereof. But if thou shouldst behold anything deserving of reproof, take care that thou doest it not; and if at any time thou hast done it, quickly amend thy conduct. As thou observeth others, so also do they observe thee. O how sweet and pleasant a thing it is to see brethren fervent, and devout, well-mannered and well-disciplined! And, conversely, how grievous it is to see brethren whose lives are disordered and who fail to practice the obligations of their high calling! How harmful it is when they neglect the good purpose of their vocation, and busy themselves in that which is not committed to their care!

Be mindful of thine avowed profession, and keep ever before thee the image of the Crucified Christ. Meditate on His life, and thou wilt be ashamed to find how far removed thou art from His perfection, though thou hast been long in the way of God. The Religious who earnestly and devoutly contemplates the most holy life and Passion of our Lord, will find there in abundance whatsoever is necessary and profitable for him; nor shall he find elsewhere a better examplar than Jesus. O, if the crucified Jesus would come into our hearts, how quickly and fully should we be instructed in all truth! A fervent Religious accepteth and beareth patiently all that is commanded of him. But a Religious who is negligent and remiss undergoeth tribulation upon tribulation, and suffereth anguish and affliction on every side; for he is void of inward consolation, and is forbidden to seek solace in external things. The Religious who is without discipline layeth himself open to grievous disaster. He that seeketh a life of unrestrained liberty and ease shall be forever in anguish; for one thing or another will constantly displease or vex him.

In what manner do so many Religious live obedient to Rule under the discipline of the Cloister? They are withdrawn from the world and seldom leave their seclusion.

They eat the poorest fare; they wear coarse clothing; they labour much; they speak little; they w[illegible]ng; they rise early; they continue long in prayer; they read regularly; they discipline themselves rigorously. Observe the Carthusians, the Cistercians, and the monks and members of other religious orders, how they rise every night to sing praises to our Lord! Wert thou slothful and remiss, this great multitude would give thee cause for shame when they begin their joyful praises to God. O that we might perpetually praise the Lord our God with all our heart and voice! O that we need never eat, or drink, or sleep; but mightest be ever praising God and employing ourselves in spiritual exercises! Then thou wouldst be far happier than thou art now, when under compulsion to serve the many necessities of the body. Would to God that there were no such needs, but only the spiritual refections of the soul, which, alas, we do taste so seldom.

When a man attaineth to that estate in which he no longer seeketh the consolation of any created thing, then only doth he begin more perfectly to know God. Then will he be well content with whatsoever doth befall him. Then will he neither exult over great things or small, but wholly and confidently commit himself to God, who is All in all; in Whom nothing perisheth or dieth, but all things do live, and serve Him instantly at His beckoning.

Remember thy end, and that time lost returneth never. Without watchfulness and diligence thou shalt not acquire virtue. If once thou beginnest to be remiss in thy spiritual exercises thou wilt quickly wax evil. But if thou apply thyself fervently to the things of the spirit, thou wilt find abundant peace; and thy labours will be lightened by the help of God's grace and thine own love of virtue. The fervent and diligent man is prepared for all things. To resist vice and passion is far harder than any bodily toil; and he that faileth to overcome small faults will little by little fall into greater. Thou wilt always rejoice in the evening if thou hast spent the day in virtuous occupation. Keep a watch on thyself; admonish thyself; bestir thyself to virtue; and, howsoever it may be with others, be not negligent for thy soul's salvation. The more fervent and vigilant thy self-discipline, the greater thy spiritual advancement.

BOOK TWO

Thoughts Pertaining to the Inward Life

CHAPTER I

Of the Inward Life

The Kingdom of God is within you, saith our Lord. Turn thyself to the Lord with thy whole heart, forsake this wretched world, and thy soul shall find rest. Learn to despise all outward things, devoting thyself to spiritual things only, and thou wilt perceive the Kingdom of God come unto thee. For the Kingdom of God is peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, the which is not given to the wicked. Christ will come unto thee, and give thee His consolation, if thou prepare for Him in thy heart a worthy dwelling place. All His glory and beauty are from within, and there He findeth delight. The inward man He often visiteth, sweetly communing with him, and granting unto him gracious comfort, peace, and wonderful friendship.

Come then, O faithful soul; make ready thy heart for this Bridegroom, that he may vouchsafe to come and dwell within thee. For thus He sayeth: *If any man love Me, he will keep My word, and We will come and make Our abode with him.* Give admittance, therefore, to Christ, and deny entrance to all others. When thou hast Christ, thou art rich, and He sufficeth thee; He will be thy faithful and provident helper in all things; and thou wilt not need to rely upon man. For men soon change, and quickly forget thee; but Christ abideth forever, and standeth steadfastly by thee unto the end.

Put not thy trust in frail and mortal man, even though he be helpful and well beloved: neither oughtest thou to and thou wilt be able better to meditate upon heavenly things, and oftentimes experience inward joy.

CHAPTER 2

Of Humble Submission

Do not concern thyself overmuch about who is for thee or against thee; but take care to act so that God will be with thee in everything that thou doest. Keep clean thy conscience, and God will defend thee, for he that receiveth the protection of God, no man's malice shall be able to harm. Learn to be silent and to endure, and thou shalt surely receive the help of the Lord. He alone knoweth the time and manner of thy deliverance; therefore oughtest thou to resign thyself wholly to Him. To God it belongeth to help; He will deliver thee from all confusion. It is oftentimes profitable to us that other men know and reprove our faults, for thus only do we preserve our humility.

When a man humbleth himself on account of his failings, he readily pacifieth others, and is soon reconciled to those that were displeased with him. God protecteth and delivereth the meek; the humble He loveth and comforteth. Unto the meek man He inclineth Himself; unto the humble He giveth great grace, and him that was brought low He raiseth to glory. Unto the humble He revealeth His secrets, and sweetly inviteth and draweth him unto Himself. The humble man, though he suffer wrong, is filled with great peace, in that he resteth in God and [illegible] the world. Think not that thou hast made any progress in the things of the spirit unless thou esteem thyself inferior to all men.

CHAPTER 3

Of the Good Peaceable Man

FIRST, have peace in thy heart, and then thou wilt be able to bring peace to others. The man of peace hath more power for good than he that is well learnèd. A passionate man turneth good into evil, and readily believeth evil of others; whereas a good peaceable man turneth all things to good. He that is well established in peace is suspicious of no man; but he that is discontented and troubled is shaken with many suspicions: he hath no quiet himself, nor doth he suffer others to rest. Oftentimes he giveth voice to that which he ought not to utter; and leaveth undone that which it were expedient for him to do. He concerneth himself with what other men have vowed to do, and neglecteth the duties to which he himself is pledged. First, therefore, be zealous for thyself, and then thou mayest justly become zealous for thy neighbours good.

Thou knowest well how to excuse and cover up thine own deeds, but art very unwilling to accept the excuses of others. It were more just wert thou to accuse thyself, and excuse thy brother. If thou wilt be borne with, bear also with others. Alas! true charity and humility are as yet far from thee, for charity knoweth not how to be angry with any, nor is charity moved with indignation, save only against oneself. Count it not meritorious in thee to associate with the good and gentle, for this is naturally pleasing to all men; and everyone willingly enjoyeth the peaceful companionship of those of like feelings, and loveth best those that are of one mind with him. But to be able to live peaceably with hard and perverse persons, or with those that lack discipline, or with such as go contrary to us, is a great grace, and a most commendable and manly thing.

Some there are that constantly have peace in their hearts, and so are at peace with others. And some have neither peace in themselves, nor suffer others to have peace: they are grievous to others, and still more grievous to themselves. Others again keep themselves in peace, and study how to bring peace to others. Nevertheless, our whole peace in this miserable life consisteth rather in humble forbearance than in escaping adversity. He that findeth the secret of endurance, will enjoy the greatest peace; for having conquered himself, he is lord of the world, the friend of Christ, and the heir of Heaven.

CHAPTER 4

Of a Pure Mind and Simple Intention

THE two wings by which a man is lifted up from earthly things, are simplicity and purity. Simplicity ought to be in our intention, purity in our affection. Simplicity tendeth towards God; purity apprehendeth and, as it were, tasteth him. If thou be inwardly free from inordinate desires, nothing will arise to obstruct [illegible] good actions. Seek for nothing but the Will of God and the good of thy neighbour, and thou shalt enjoy inward liberty. If thy heart were pure, everything which God hath created would be unto thee a mirror of life, and a book of holy doctrine. For there is no creature so small or so vile, but doth show forth His goodness.

If thou wert inwardly good and pure, thou wouldst be able to perceive and understand all things without impediment. The pure heart penetrates Heaven and Hell. As a man is inwardly, so he judgeth outwardly. If there be any joy in the world, rest assured that the pure in heart possess it. And if there be anywhere tribulation and anguish, an evil conscience knoweth this best. As iron thrust into fire loseth its rust and becometh all white and glowing, so he that turneth himself wholly to God puts off all slothfulness and is transformed into a new man.

When a man beginneth to grow lukewarm in the things of the spirit, he shrinketh from undertaking even a small labour, and gladly turneth to outward consolation; but when he is resolved and beginneth to perfect and overcome himself, and to walk manfully in the way of God, then he esteemeth light those burdens that formerly seemed so grievous unto him.

CHAPTER 5

Of the Proper Consideration of Oneself

WE ought not to rely overmuch upon ourselves, for we frequently lack both grace and understanding. There is but little light in us, and this we may extinguish by our own negligence. Moreover, we often fail to perceive the extent of our own inward blindness. We frequently do evil, and, what is worse, we excuse it. Oftentimes we are moved by passion and think it to be zeal. We reprove small faults in others, and remain blind to greater faults in ourselves. All too quickly we feel and resent what we suffer at the hands of others, but remain indifferent to the suffering we inflict upon others. Whosoever pondereth over and justly weigheth his own doings, will find no cause to judge others harshly.

The spiritual man putteth the care of his soul before all other cares; and he that hath himself in mind, findeth no difficulty in keeping silent about the faults of others. Thou wilt never be an inwardly religious and devout man unless thou pass over in silence the shortcomings of thy fellow men, and diligently examine thine own weaknesses. If thou attend wholly unto God and thy soul's health, thou wilt be but little moved by the affairs of the world. Where art thou when thou art not present to thyself? And when thou hast examined all things, what doth this profit thee if thou hast neglected thy soul? If thou wouldst have peace of mind and perfect union with God, thou must put aside all worldly things and look inwards.

Free thyself from all temporal cares, and thou shalt make great progress. But if thou esteem as important any temporal thing, thou shalt fall back as a result thereof. Let nothing be great, nothing high, nothing pleasing, nothing acceptable to thee, but only God Himself, or that which is of God. Deem as vain all creature comforts. The soul that loveth God despiseth all things other than God. God alone, eternal and infinite, pervadeth all things; He is the solace of the soul and the heart's true joy.

CHAPTER 6

Of the Joy of a Good Conscience

THE glory of a good man is the testimony of a good conscience. If thy conscience be at peace, thou wilt never lack joy. A good conscience is able to endure many things, and is cheerful in adversity; but an evil conscience is for ever fearful and troubled. Verily, thou wilt rest sweetly if thy heart reproach thee not. Rejoice not save when thou hast done right. Evil men never experience true happiness, nor do they enjoy inward peace; for, as Our Lord saith, *There is no peace for the wicked.* And if they should say: "We are in peace, no evil will come upon us, and who will dare to harm us?", believe them not; for suddenly the wrath of God will arise, and their works shall be brought to nought; their schemes will perish.

For one who truly loves God, to glory in tribulation is no hard thing; for to glory thus is to glory in the Cross of Christ. Fleeting indeed are the honours given and received of [illegible] and sorrow is never absent from the glory of this world. The glory of good men is not in their eloquence, but in their conscience. The joy of the righteous is of God, and in God, for they rejoice in the truth. Whomsoever desireth true and everlasting glory, careth nothing for temporal glory. And he that seeketh temporal glory, despising it not in his heart, hath little love for heavenly glory. He that is moved neither by the praise nor the censure of men, enjoyeth great tranquility of heart.

He whose conscience is pure, readily findeth peace and contentment. Thou art not more holy for being praised; nor more worthless if thou be found fault with and despised. What thou art, that thou art; nor canst thou be accounted greater than thou art in the sight of God. Consider thine inward state, and thou wilt not heed what men say of thee. Man judgeth by outward appearance, but God seeth the Heart. Man weigheth thine actions, but God weigheth thine intentions. To seek always to do good, and to little esteem oneself, is the sign of a humble soul. To refuse the consolation of any creature, is a sign of great purity and inward faith.

He that seeketh none to witness for him, doth show that he hath put his whole trust in God. As the Apostle Paul saith, *For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but he whom God commendeth.* To walk inwardly with God, and to free the soul of all worldly affection, is the true condition of a spiritual man.

CHAPTER 7

Of the Love of Jesus above all Things

BLESSÈD is he who understandeth what it is to love Jesus, and to despise himself for Jesus' sake. It behoveth the lover to forsake all things for the Belovèd; and Jesus alone is to be loved above all things. The love of things created is deceiving and inconstant; the love of Jesus is true and enduring. He that cleaveth unto creatures shall fall when they fall; but he that embraceth Jesus shall be made steadfast for ever. Love Him, and keep Him for thy friend. When all have gone, He will not forsake thee, nor, at thine end, will He suffer thee to perish. The time will come when thou must be separated from all, whether thou willest or not.

Hold fast to Jesus in life and in death, and put thy trust in His faithfulness, Who alone can help thee when all others fail. The nature of thy Belovèd is such that He will admit no rival; He alone must dwell in thy heart, and reign there as a king upon His throne. If thou couldst empty thy heart of all creatures, then would Jesus gladly dwell with thee. Whatsoever thou reposest in man, without Jesus, is almost all lost. Trust not, nor lean upon a wind-blown reed; for *all flesh is grass, and the glory thereof shall fall like the flower of the grass.*

If thou look only to the outward appearance of men, thou shalt quickly be deceived; and if thou seekest in others thy comfort and profit, thou wilt often suffer loss. Seek

Jesus only in all things and thou shalt surely find Him. If thou seekest [illegible]hou shalt also find self, but to thine own ruin. For if a man seek not Jesus, he doth injure himself more than could the whole world and all his enemies.

CHAPTER 8

Of Intimate Friendship with Jesus

When Jesus is present, all is well, and nothing seems difficult; but when Jesus is absent, everything is arduous. When Jesus speaketh not within us, all other comfort is worthless; but if Jesus speak but one word, we feel great consolation. Did not Mary Magdalene rise immediately from the place where she wept when Martha said to her: "The Master is come, and calleth for thee"? O happy the hour, when Jesus cometh, and calleth thee from tears to the joy of the spirit! How arid, and hard is the heart that is without Jesus! How foolish and vain thou art, if thou desirest anything other than Jesus! For to lose Him were a greater loss than if thou shouldst lose the whole world.

What can the world profit thee without Jesus? To live without Jesus is a grievous hell; to live with Jesus, a sweet paradise. If Jesus be with thee, no enemy can harm thee. He that findeth Jesus, findeth a good treasure, yea the Good above all good! And he that loseth Jesus, loseth much indeed, yea, more than the whole world! He that liveth without Jesus is poor indeed; but he that standeth well with Jesus is rich beyond measure. To know how to hold converse with Jesus is a great art; an[illegible]know how to retain Jesus is great wisdom. Be thou humble and peaceable, and Jesus shall be with thee. Be thou devout and quiet within, and Jesus shall abide in thee. But if thou turn aside to outward things, thou mayest soon drive out Jesus and lose His grace. And if thou shouldst drive Him from thy heart and lose Him, in whom wilt thou take refuge; whom then wilt thou seek for thy friend? Without a friend thou canst not live happily; and if Jesus be not thy friend above all others, thou wilt indeed be sad and desolate. Thou actest foolishly therefore if thou puttest thy trust in, or delightest in any other. Better that a man have the whole world against him, than that he should offend Jesus. Of all therefore that are dear to thee, Jesus alone should be specially beloved.

Love all for Jesus, but Jesus for Himself. Jesus Christ alone is to be loved supremely; for He only is found good and faithful above all other friends. Through Him, and for His sake, let both friends and enemies be dear unto thee. Pray unto Him for all, that He may vouchsafe that all will know and love Him. Never desire to be singularly commended or beloved, for that appertaineth only unto God, Who hath none like unto Himself. Desire not that the heart of any be wholly preoccupied with loving thee, nor yield thy heart wholly to the love of another; but let Jesus abide in thee and in every man.

Be pure and free within; and entangle not thy heart with any creature. Thou shouldst come naked, bringing a pure heart unto thy Lord, if thou wouldst have freedom to see how sweet God is. And truly, unless thou be drawn and guided b[illegible] grace, thou wilt never attain to this happiness. Fors[illegible] and take leave of all, that thou mayest be united to Him alone. For when the grace of God cometh to a man, then is he mighty in all things; and when it goeth away, then he becometh poor and weak, and, as it were, abandoned to the pangs of affliction and sorrow. At such times, yield not to dejection and despair, but calmly accept God's will, enduring whatever may befall thee for the glory of Jesus Christ. For after winter cometh summer; after darkness the dawn; and after the storm a great calm.

CHAPTER 9

Of the Want of All Consolation

It is no hard thing to reject human consolation when we enjoy that of God. But it is a great, yea a very great thing, to be able to forgo all consolation, both human and divine; and, for God's honour, to be willing cheerfully to endure exile of heart, to seek oneself in nothing, nor to give thought to one's own deserts. What cause hast thou for gratification, if, at the coming of grace, thou be cheerful and devout? For that hour is longed for by all. He rideth easily and pleasantly whom the grace of God carrieth. What wonder, then, if he feel not his burden, who is borne up by the Almighty, and led by the Sovereign Guide.

We gladly keep something for our comfort; and it is hard indeed for a man to strip himself of self. The holy martyr Lawrence, with his priest, overcame the world, for he despised whatsoever seemed dele[illegible] in the world; and, for the love of Christ, patiently suffered God's high priest Sixtus, whom he loved most dearly, to be taken from him. Thus his love of the Creator enabled him to rise above the love of man, and put the Divine pleasure before human consolation. So also thou must learn to give up even a near and dear friend for the love of God; neither must thou grieve when a friend forsake thee, for thou knowest that we all at last must be separated one from another.

A man must strive long and mightily with himself, before he can learn fully to overcome the forces of evil in himself, and to direct his whole heart unto God. When a man relieth upon himself only, he readily seeketh human consolation, but the true lover of Christ, and one diligent in the pursuit of virtue, falleth not back upon comforts and bodily pleasures, preferring rather to undergo severe discipline and arduous trials for Christ.

When, therefore, God bestoweth spiritual consolation, receive it with thanksgiving, realising that it comes as God's free gift, and not because of any merit of thine own. Be not proud, nor over joyful, nor vainly presumptuous; be rather the more humble for this gift, more vigilant and careful in all thine actions; for that hour will pass, and temptation will follow. When consolation is withdrawn do not immediately despair, but with humility and patience await the heavenly visitation; for God hath power to restore unto thee more abundant consolation. This is nothing new or strange to them that have knowledge of the way of God; the great Saints and Prophets of old ofttimes experienced thi[illegible]nation of feeling.

Wherefore one under the enjoyment of divine grace said: "In my prosperity, I shall never be moved". But when this grace was withdrawn, he suffered inward disquiet, saying: "Thou didst turn Thy face from me, and I was troubled." Yet notwithstanding these things he despaired not, but prayed to God more earnestly, saying: "Unto thee, O Lord, will I cry, and unto my God will I pray." And presently he received the fruit of his prayer, and bore witness that he was heard of God, saying: "The Lord hath heard and taken pity on me; the Lord is become my helper." But in what way? "Thou hast", he said, "turned my sorrow into joy, and thou hast compassed me about with gladness." If it hath been thus with great Saints, we that are feeble and poor ought not to lose heart if we be sometimes fervent and sometimes cold; for the Holy Spirit cometh and goeth according to His good pleasure. Wherefore holy Job saith: *Thou visitest him early in the morning, and suddenly thou provest him.*

Upon what then can I hope, or in whom shall I trust, save in the great mercy of God and the hope of heavenly grace? For whether I have about me good men, or devout brethren, or faithful friends, or holy books, or beautiful treatises, or sweet chants and melodious hymns; all these help but little, and have little savour, when grace forsaketh me, and I am left in mine own poverty. At such a time there is no better remedy than patience, and humble self-submission to the will of God.

None there be, no matter how religious and devout, that do not at times experience a withdrawal of grace, or feel some diminution of fervour. Never [illegible]aint, however sublimely rapt and illumined, who first and last was not tried and tempted; for none is worthy of the high contemplation of God, save he who hath undergone testing and tribulation for the sake of God. And trial going before is a token of consolation to follow. For to them that are tested by temptations, is promised heavenly comfort. *To him that overcometh*, saith Our Lord, *will I give to eat of the Tree of Life.*

Divine consolation is given that a man may be made stronger to endure adversity; and temptation followeth lest he wax proud of God's grace. The devil sleepeth not, neither is the flesh yet dead. Wherefore cease not to prepare thyself for the fight; for on thy right hand and on thy left are enemies that never rest.

CHAPTER 10

Of Gratitude for the Grace of God

WHY seekest thou rest, since thou art born to labour? Dispose thyself to patience rather than to comfort, and to the bearing of the Cross, rather than to thine own pleasure. What secular man is there that would not willingly receive spiritual comfort and joy could he but always obtain it? For spiritual consolations far surpass all the delights of the world, and all sensual pleasures. All earthly delights are either empty or impure. Spiritual joys alone are honourable and rewarding; for these engender virtue, and are infused into pure minds by God. But no man can enjoy these divine comforts continuously; for the time of temptation soon returneth.

False freedom of mind and too great self-confidence are great obstacles to heavenly visitation. God doth well in giving man the grace of His comfort; but man doth ill in not yielding all to God with thanksgiving. Therefore God's gifts of grace cannot flow in us because of ingratitude to the Giver, and our failure to return them to the Fountain-head. For grace is ever present to him that is truly thankful; and what is wont to be given to the humble is withheld from the proud.

I desire not the consolation that taketh all compunction from me; nor do I aspire to that contemplation which begetteth intellectual pride. For not all that is high is holy; nor every sweet thing good; nor every desire pure; nor is everything upon which we set our hearts pleasing unto God. How gladly do I receive that grace whereby I may become ever more humble, more devoutly fearful, and more ready to renounce myself. For whomsoever is taught by the gift of grace, and schooled by the chastisement of the withdrawal thereof, will not dare to attribute any good to himself, but will rather acknowledge himself poor and naked. Render unto God that which is God's, and ascribe unto thyself that which is thine own; that is, give thanks unto God for His grace, but to thyself alone ascribe both the guilt and the punishment of thy wrongdoings.

Set thyself always in the lowest place, and the highest shall be given thee; for the highest cannot exist without the lowest. The saints that stand highest with God are the least in their own sight; and the more glorious they are, the greater is their humility. They that are full of truth and heavenly glory have no desire for vainglory. They that are grounded and confirmed in God are incapable of pride. And they that ascribe unto God whatsoever good they have received, seek not glory one of another, but long for that glory which is from God alone; and desire above all things that God may be glorified in them, and in all the saints; and to that end they strive continuously.

Be therefore thankful for the smallest gift, and thou shalt be worthy to receive a greater. Let the least be unto thee even as the greatest; and the meanest thing a precious treasure. Consider the greatness of the Giver, and no gift will seem to thee small or worthless. For that which is given by the Most High God cannot be demeaned. Yea, even if He should send thee punishment and pain, give thanks and accept them gladly, for whatsoever He permitteth to befall us is done for our salvation. He that desireth to retain the grace of God should be thankful for grace given, and patient when it is withdrawn from him. Let him pray, that it may return; let him be careful and humble, that he lose it not.

CHAPTER II

How Few are the Lovers of the Cross of Jesus

Jesus now hath many lovers of His Heavenly kingdom, but few bearers of His Cross; He hath many that are desirous of consolation, but few of tribulation; He findeth many companions of His table, but few of His abstinence. All desire to rejoice with Him, but few are willing to suffer for His sake. Many follow Jesus unto the breaking of bread, but few unto the drinking of the Cup of His Passion. Many revere His miracles, but few partake of the ignominy of His Cross. Many love Jesus so long as no adversity befalls them. Many praise and bless Him, so long as they receive His consolation. But if Jesus hide Himself, and leave them but a little while, they either complain or fall into great dejection of spirit.

But they that love Jesus for His own sake, and not for the consolation they receive from Him, bless Him in tribulation and anguish of heart, even as they do when in the state of highest consolation. Yea, were He to deny them consolation, yet would they ever render praise and thanks unto Him.

O how powerful is the pure love of Jesus, which containeth nothing of self-interest or self-love! Are not those that seek His love for selfish reasons like unto mercenaries and hirelings? Do not they that are ever thinking of their own profit and advantage, show themselves to be lovers of self rather than of Christ? Where is to be found even one who is willing to serve God without thought of reward?

Seldom is there to be found any man so spiritual as would suffer himself to be stript of all things. Where is to be found one that is truly humble in spirit, and wholly detached from every created thing? The worth of such an one is beyond price. If a man should give all his substance, it is as nothing; and if he do grievous penance, it is but little; even if he should comprehend all knowledge, he is still far from his goal; and though he hath great virtue and most fervent devotion, yet is there much lacking in him. One thing alone is sovereignly necessary to him. What is that? That, having forsaken all things, he forsake himself, and go wholly out of himself, retaining nothing of self-love. And when he hath done all that he knoweth ought to be done, let him consider that he hath done nothing.

Let him not ponder overmuch on what he thinketh may be greatly esteemed; but let him truthfully acknowledge himself to be an unprofitable servant. For the Truth Himself saith: *When ye shall have done all those things that are commanded you, say, 'We are unprofitable servants'*. Then he may indeed be called truly pure and naked in spirit, and say with the Prophet, *I am alone and poor*. There is none richer, none more powerful, none more free, than he that is able to forsake himself and all things, and set himself in the lowest place.

CHAPTER 12

Of the Royal Road of the Holy Cross

THE exhortation: *Deny thyself, take up thy cross, and follow Jesus,* seemeth to many an hard word; but how much harder will it be to hear this final word: *Depart from Me, ye cursèd, into everlasting fire.* They that now delight to hear and to follow the Word of the Cross, will not then have cause to fear Christ's word of eternal damnation. This sign of the Cross will be in the Heavens when Our Lord shall come to judge. Then will all the servants of the Cross, who in their lifetime conformed to the Word of Him that was crucified, draw near unto Christ the Judge with great confidence.

Why, then, fearest thou to take up the Cross which leadeth thee to the Kingdom? In the Cross is salvation; in the Cross is life; in the Cross is protection against our enemies; in the Cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness; in the Cross is strength of mind; in the Cross is joy of spirit; in the Cross the sum of all virtue; in the Cross perfection of holiness. There is no health of soul, nor hope of eternal life, save in the Cross. Take up thy Cross, therefore, and follow Jesus, and thou shalt go into life everlasting. He that bore His own Cross is gone before and showeth thee the way. He died for thee upon the Cross, that thou also shouldst bear thy cross, and, for Love of Him, be ready to die on the Cross. For if thou die with Him, thou shalt also live with Him; and if thou art His companion in suffering, thou shalt also partake with Him in glory.

Behold, in the Cross all things doth consist, and in dying thereon, all doth depend. There is no other way unto life, and true inward peace, but the way of the Cross, which is that of daily self-denial and self-sacrifice. Go where thou wilt, seek where thou wilt, thou shalt find no higher way above, nor safer way below, than the way of the Holy Cross. Thou mayest dispose, direct and arrange all things according to thy will and pleasure; nevertheless thou wilt still suffer, either willingly or unwillingly, and so thou canst not ever escape the Cross. For either thou wilt suffer pain in thy body, or tribulation of soul and spirit.

At times thou wilt feel forsaken of God; at others, thou wilt be vexed by thy neighbour; and, what is more, thou wilt ofttimes be a burden unto thyself. Nor will any remedy or consolation ease thine anguish, but, until God willeth to deliver thee, thou must needs suffer and endure. For it is God's will that thou must learn to suffer trial and tribulation without comfort; that thou submit thyself wholly to Him, and, by the way of the Cross, become more humble in spirit. No man hath felt more inwardly the agonies of the Passion of Christ, than he who hath himself suffered the like. The Cross, therefore is always ready, and everywhere confronts thee. Run where thou wilt, thou canst not escape it; for wheresoever thou goest, thou carriest thyself with thee. Thou canst not escape thyself. Whether above or below, without or within, wheresoever thou dost turn thee, everywhere thou shalt find the Cross; and above all, thou must keep thy soul in patience, if thou wouldst have peace of heart, and merit a crown everlasting.

If thou bear the Cross willingly, it will bear thee, and lead thee to the end thou desirest; the place wherein thy sufferings will be ended, for here this cannot be. If thou bear the Cross unwillingly, thou makest for thyself a still heavier burden, and dost but grieve thyself the more; for thou must still sustain it. And if thou cast away one cross, it is certain that thou must take up another, and perhaps an heavier.

Thinkest thou to escape that which no mortal man can avoid? Was ever Saint in this world without his cross and tribulation? Throughout His life, our Lord Jesus Christ was not one hour without the anguish of His Passion. In the words of Our Lord: *Christ must needs suffer, and rise again from the dead, and so enter into His glory*. Seek where thou wilt, thou shalt find no nobler way than the royal way, which is the way of the Holy Cross.

Christ's whole life was a cross and a martyrdom; and dost thou seek for thyself rest and joy? Thou errest indeed, and losest thy way, if thou seek other than to suffer tribulation; for this whole mortal life is full of sorrow, and marked about with crosses. And the higher a man hath advanced in spiritual things, the heavier will be the crosses he is called upon to bear; for the pain of his exile increaseth with his love for God.

Nevertheless one thus afflicted hath also this consolation, that he perceiveth the fruits that accrue unto him by the bearing of his cross. For, if he endure willingly and patiently his burden of tribulation, it becometh transformed to the sure hope of divine consolation. And the more the flesh is subdued by affliction, the more the spirit is strengthened by inward grace. And ofttimes the disciple is so greatly comforted and strengthened by tribulation and adversity, that, for the love of conformity to the Cross of Christ, he would not wish that tribulation and sorrow to be taken from him; for the more acceptable he accounteth himself to God, the more grievous the things he may be called upon to suffer for God. It is not Man's own power, but rather the grace of Christ that enableth him to achieve so much in frail flesh; thus, through fervour of spirit, that which by nature it ever abhors and flees from is embraced and loved.

Man's natural inclination is not such that he is willing to bear the Cross, to love the Cross, to chasten the body and bring it into subjection; to shun honours, to willingly suffer insults, to despise himself, and to wish to be despised; to endure all manner of adversities and losses, and to desire neither prosperity nor profit in this world. Trust in thyself, and thou shalt accomplish nothing; but if thou trust in the Lord, strength will be given thee from heaven, and the world and the flesh be made subject to thy will. Neither wilt thou fear thine enemy the Devil, if thou be armed with faith and signed with the Cross of Christ.

Resolve, therefore, like a good and faithful servant of Christ, to bear manfully the Cross of thy Lord, who was crucified for love of thee. Prepare thyself to bear many adversities and divers troubles in this wretched life; for so it will be with thee wheresoever thou art, and so shalt thou find it wheresoever thou hidest thyself. It must be so; for there is no remedy for, nor means of escape from, tribulation and sorrow; bear them, therefore, with patience and fortitude. Drink lovingly of the Chalice of thy Lord, if thou desirest to be His friend and to have part with Him. As for consola[illegible]s, leave them to God; let Him do therein as shall best please Him. But let thou thyself determine to suffer trials, and to account them the greatest consolations; for the sufferings of this present time, even if thou wert to endure them all, are not worthy to be compared with the future glory.

When thou shalt have attained to that state when tribulation is sweet unto thee, and thou dost relish it for Christ's sake, then thou mayest consider that all is well with thee; for thou hast found a paradise upon earth. So long as suffering is grievous to thee, and thou seekest to escape it, so long wilt thou suffer disquiet of mind, for the tribulation thou fleest from will follow thee everywhere.

If thou wilt determine, as thou must, to suffer and to die, all will soon go better with thee, and thou shalt find peace. Yea, even if, like Saint Paul, thou be caught up into the third heaven, thou art not thereby immune from adversity. *I will show him*, saith Jesus, *how great things he must suffer for My Name.* Suffering must be thy portion, therefore, if thou art resolved to love and to serve Jesus to the end.

Would to God that thou wert worthy to suffer somewhat for the Name of Jesus! How great and lasting would be thy glory! How great the exultation of the Saints of God! How great the edification of thy neighbour! For all men commend endurance; but how few are willing to undergo suffering! Surely thou oughtest gladly to suffer for Christ, since so many suffer more grievous things for the world.

Know for certain that thou must lead a dying life; and the more a man dieth to self, so much the more doth he begin to live unto God. No man is fit to comprehend heavenly things save he who hath resigned himself to bear adversities for Christ. Nothing is more acceptable to God, nothing more salutary to thee in this world, than to suffer willingly for Christ. And if the choice be given thee, choose rather to suffer hardships for Christ, than to be refreshed with many consolations; for then wilt thou become more like unto Christ, and more conformable to all the Saints. For our worthiness, and the advancement of our spiritual estate, consisteth not in the enjoyment of many sweetnesses and consolations; but rather in resolutely enduring great affliction and tribulation.

Truly, had there been any better or more perfect way to man's salvation than that of suffering, Christ would have shown it by word and example. But He exhorted His own disciples, and all who desired to follow Him, to bear the Cross, saying: *If any will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.* So, when we have thoroughly read and searched all things, let this be the final conclusion: *that through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of God.*

BOOK THREE

On Inward Consolation

CHAPTER I

Of Christ Speaking Inwardly to the Faithful Soul

I *will hearken what the Lord God speaketh in me.* Blessèd is the soul that heareth our Lord speaking within her, and receiveth from His mouth the Word of consolation. Blessèd are the ears that hear the Divine whisper, and give no heed to the whisperings of the world. Blessèd indeed are the ears which hearken not to the voice which soundeth outwardly, but hear only the inward voice of Truth. Blessèd are the eyes that are closed to outward things, and are intent only upon inward things. Blessèd are they that enter into things internal, and, by daily exercises, endeavour to prepare themselves more and more for the receiving of heavenly secrets. Blessèd are they that long to give themselves wholly to God, and free themselves from all earthly impediments.

Take heed, O my soul! Seal thy doors against the desires of the senses; that thou mayest hear what the Lord thy God speaketh within thee. Thus sayeth thy Belovèd: *I am thy Salvation, thy Peace, and thy Life; keep thee with Me, and thou shalt find peace.* Leave hold of all transitory things, and seek those that are eternal. What are all temporal things but seductive deceivers? And what shall all created things avail thee if Thy Creator forsake thee? Renounce, therefore, all else, and labour to please and to be faithful unto Him, that thou mayest attain true blessedness.

CHAPTER 2

That the Truth Speaketh Inwardly without Noise of Words

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

SPEAK, O Lord, for thy servant heareth. I am Thy servant, grant me understanding, that I may know Thy testimonies. Incline my heart to the words of Thy Mouth; let Thy speech distil as the dew. In times past the children of Israel said unto Moses: *Speak Thou unto us, and we will hear; let not the Lord speak unto us, lest haply we die.* Not thus, O Lord, not thus, I beseech Thee; but rather with Samuel the prophet, I humbly and earnestly entreat: *Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.* Let not Moses, nor any of the Prophets, speak to me; but do Thou speak unto me, O Lord God, Who dost inspire and enlighten all the prophets. Thou alone, without their aid, canst perfectly instruct me; without Thee the voices of the Prophets are unavailing.

Truly, they sound forth words, but the spirit they cannot give. They speak most beautifully, but if Thou be silent, they inflame not the heart. They give the letter, but Thou only canst enlighten the understanding. They tell of the Mysteries, but none but Thee canst unseal and reveal them. They show the way, but strength to walk therein cometh from Thee. Their work is from without, but Thou dost enter and illumine the heart. They prepare the ground, but Thou alone givest the harvest. They cry aloud in words, but Thou openest the ears and imparteth understanding.

Therefore let not Moses speak unto me, but Thou, O Lord my God, Who art Truth Everlasting, lest, being admonished in word only, and lacking Thy fire in my heart, I die and bring forth no fruit; lest it be to my condemnation that the Word was heard, but not fulfilled; known, but not loved; believed, but not obeyed. Speak therefore, Lord, for Thy servant heareth; for Thou hast the words of eternal life. Speak Thou unto me words that will bring comfort to my soul, words for the amendment of my whole life, to Thy praise, glory, and honour everlasting.

CHAPTER 3

That the Words of God are to be Heard with Humility, and that Many Weigh them not

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

MY son, hear my words, words of greatest sweetness, surpassing all the learning of the philosophers and wise men of this world. My words are spirit and life, and cannot be weighed by the understanding of man. They are not to be brought out for vain pleasure, but are to be heard in silence, and received with all humility and love.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

And I said: Blessed is the man whom Thou shalt instruct, O Lord, and shall teach out of Thy law, that Thou mayest give him rest from the evil days, that he be not desolate upon the earth.

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

I have taught the prophets from the beginning and cease not, even to this day, to speak to all, though many are hardened and deaf to My voice. There are many also who listen more willingly to the world than to God, who would sooner follow the desires of the flesh than God's good pleasure. The world promiseth things temporal and small, and is served with great eagerness; I promise things most high and eternal, yet the hearts of men remain cold and unresponsive. Who is there that serveth and obeyeth Me in all things with the same care as the world and its lords are served? "Be ashamed, O Sidon, saith the sea"; and if thou ask the cause, hear wherefore. For a small reward men will undertake a long journey; but for eternal life many will scarce lift a foot from the ground. A thing of little value is eagerly sought after; for a single piece of money there is shameful contention; for a trifling thing or a mere promise, men fear not to toil night and day.

But, alas! for good incomputable, for an inestimable reward, for the highest honour, for endless glory, they will not suffer even the least fatigue. Be ashamed, therefore, thou slothful and complaining servant, that worldly men are found more ready to labour for perdition than thou art for life. They rejoice more in vanity than thou dost in the truth. They are ofttimes disappointed in their hopes; but My promise deceiveth none, or sendeth away empty him that trusteth in Me. What I have promised, I will give; what I have said I will fulfil; if only thou abide faithful in My love unto the end. I am the Rewarder of all good men, and the mighty Approver of all devout men.

Write My words in thy heart, and meditate diligently upon them; for in times of temptation they will be unto thee a strong defence. Whatsoever thou understandest not when thou readest, thou wilt truly know when I come to visit thee. In two ways am I wont to visit My chosen children; namely, with trial and with consolation. And every day I read them two lessons, one in reproof of their vices; the other exhorting them to practise and progress in virtue. He that heareth My words and despiseth them, hath One that will judge him in the last day.

A Prayer to Implore the Grace of Devotion

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

O LORD My God, to me Thou art whatsoever is good; but who am I that I should dare to speak to Thee? I am Thy poorest, meanest servant, and a most vile worm; more worthless and contemptible than I can conceive or express. Yet, O Lord, Thou wilt remember me, that am nothing, and have nothing, and can do nothing. Thou alone art good, just and holy; Thou canst do all things; Thou bestoweth all things; Thou fillest all things; the sinner alone Thou leavest empty and void. O Lord, of Thy mercy fill my heart with Thy grace, for Thou willest not that Thy works should be in vain.

How shall I suffer myself in this wretched life, unless Thou strengthen me with Thy mercy and grace? Turn not Thy face from me, O Lord; delay not Thy coming; withdraw not Thy consolation, lest my soul become like unto a waterless land. O Lord, teach me to do Thy will; teach me to live worthily and humbly in Thy sight; for Thou art my wisdom, Thou alone dost truly know me, and didst know me before the world was made, and before I was born into the world.

CHAPTER 4

That We Ought to Walk before God in Truth and Humility

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

My son, walk thou before Me in truth, and seek Me always in simplicity of heart. He that goeth before Me in truth shall be defended from the assaults of Satan, and Truth shall deliver him from his deceivers, and from the slanders of the wicked. If Truth liberate thee, thou shalt be free indeed, and shall take no account of the vain words of men.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

Lord, what Thou sayest is true: I beseech Thee, so let it be with me. Let Thy Truth teach and guard me, and bring me to salvation in the end. Let it deliver me from every evil affection and inordinate desire; and [illegible]l walk with Thee in great freedom of heart.

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

I will teach thee, saith the Truth, the things that are right and pleasing unto Me. Meditate upon thy sins with great displeasure and sorrow, and never esteem thyself anything because of thy good works. In truth thou art a sinner, oppressed and enslaved by many passions. Of thyself thou ever tendest to nothing; thou quickly failest, art soon overcome, soon confounded and dissolved. Thou hast nothing whereof thou canst glory, but much which accounteth thee of little worth; for thou art weaker in spirit than thou art able to comprehend.

Therefore, whatsoever thou doest, let nothing seem great to thee, nothing precious, nothing wonderful, nothing worthy of fame, nothing lofty, nothing praiseworthy or desirable, save that which is eternal. Let the Eternal Truth rejoice thee above all things; and let thine own great unworthiness be ever displeasing to thee. Fear nothing so much, blame nothing so much, flee nothing so much, as thine own sins and vices, the which ought to distress thee more than any worldly loss. Some walk not sincerely in My sight, but, led on by all manner of curiosity and vainglory, desire to know My secrets, and to understand the high mysteries of God, heedless both of themselves and of their soul's salvation. These, when I resist them, do oftentimes fall into great temptations and sins, through pride and curiosity.

Fear thou the judgments of God, and the wrath of the Almighty. [illegible]ume not to search out the works of the Most High, but examine thine own wickedness, in how many things thou hast offended, and how many good deeds thou hast neglected to perform. Some carry their devotion only in books, some in pictures, some in outward signs and symbols. Some have Me on their lips, but little of Me in their hearts. Others there are, enlightened in mind and understanding, and pure in heart, who continuously aspire to things eternal, who have no desire to be instructed in the things of this world, and do serve with reluctance even the necessities of nature. These hear in their hearts the voice of the Spirit of Truth; for He teacheth them to despise earthly things and to love heavenly things; to forsake the world, and day and night to long for Heaven.

CHAPTER 5

Of the Wonderful Effect of Divine Love

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

I BLESS Thee, O Heavenly Father, Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, for that Thou hast vouchsafed to remember me, a poor creature. O Father of mercies and God of all comfort, I give thanks unto Thee, Who dost sometimes refresh me with Thy consolation, unworthy as I am of this grace. Blessing and glory be unto Thee, to Thine only-begotten Son, and to the Holy Spirit the Comforter, through the ages of ages. O, my Lord God, my holy Lover, when Thou comest into my heart, all t[illegible] within me rejoiceth. Thou art my glory and the exultation of my heart; Thou art my hope and my refuge in the day of tribulation.

But because I am as yet feeble in love and imperfect in virtue, therefore I have need of Thy strength and comfort. Lord, I pray Thee visit me often, and instruct me in Thy holy discipline. Liberate me from evil passions, and heal my heart of all inordinate affections; that being inwardly purified and made whole, I may be empowered to love, courageous to suffer, and steadfast to persevere.

Love is a great thing, yea, great and good beyond comprehension; love alone lighteneth every burden, and maketh the rough places smooth. For the burden it carrieth becometh like unto no burden, and everything that is bitter it maketh sweet and wholesome. The noble love of Jesus inspireth us to do great things, and ever impelleth us to long for perfection. Love aspires to the highest and will not be held down by anything low or mean. Love longs to be free and severed from all worldly affections, that its inward vision remain unobscured; that it may not be entangled by any temporal gain, or cast down by adversity. Nothing is sweeter than love; nothing stronger, nothing higher, nothing wider, nothing more pleasant, nothing fuller or better in Heaven or earth; for love is born of God, and cannot rest save in God, above all created things.

The lover flieth, runneth and rejoiceth; he is free, and cannot be holden. He giveth all for all, and hath all in all; for he resteth in the One Highest Good, from Whom all good floweth and proceedeth. He looketh not to the gifts, but turneth [illegible]self unto the Giver above all gifts. Love ofttimes knoweth no measure, but is fervent beyond all measure. Love feeleth no burden, accounteth labour as nothing, willingly attempteth more than it can attain, considereth nothing to be impossible; for it deemeth itself able to achieve all things, and all things lawful to itself. Therefore is love valiant in all things; it fulfilleth many things, and bringeth them to fruition, where he that loveth not doth faint and fail.

Love is watchful, and sleeping slumbereth not; though weary, is never exhausted; though straitened, is not constrained; though alarmed, is not dismayed; but, like a living flame and burning torch, it surgeth upwards and safely passeth through all. Whosoever loveth, knoweth the cry of this voice. A loud cry in the ears of God is that ardent love of the soul which saith: *My God, My Love, Thou art all mine, and I am all Thine.*

Enlarge Thy love in me, that, with the inward mouth of the heart I may taste how sweet it is to love, how sweet to be dissolved and to bathe in love. Let me be possessed by love, that, through fervour of devotion, I may mount beyond myself to wondrous ecstasy. Let me sing the song of love; let me follow Thee, my Beloved, into High Heaven, and let my soul consume herself in praising Thee, rejoicing for love. Let me love Thee more than myself, and myself only for Thee. Let me love in Thee all others that truly love Thee, as the law of love, which shineth out from Thee, commandeth.

Love is swift, pure, pious, gay and delightsome. Love is courageous, patient, faithful, prudent, long-suffering, manly, and seeketh not itself. For whene[illegible] man seeketh himself, he falleth away from love. Love is circumspect, humble and upright; giving way neither to softness nor to levity, nor tending to vain things. Love is sober, chaste, steadfast, quiet, and guarded in all the senses. To superiors love is submissive and obedient; in its own sight, poor and despised; unto God, devout and thankful, ever trusting and hoping in Him, yea, even when God imparteth unto it no relish or sweetness; for without sorrow none liveth in love.

Whosoever is not ready to suffer all things, and to stand fast at the will of the Belovèd, is not worthy to be called a lover. A lover must willingly embrace all that is hard and bitter for the sake of his Belovèd; nor should he turn from Him when threatened with failure or adversity.

CHAPTER 6

Of the Proof of a True Lover of Christ

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

MY son, thou art not yet a valiant and prudent lover.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

Wherefore, O Lord?

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:
Because, when thou dost encounter a little adversity, thou givest up what thou hast undertaken, and too readily seeketh consolation. A courageous lover standeth firm in temptation, and hearkeneth not unto the crafty persuasions of the Enemy. As I please him in prosperity, so in adversity, I displease him not.

A wise lover regardeth not so much the gift of the lover, as the love of the giver; he esteemeth the love that inspired the gift above the value of the gift, and setteth all gifts far beneath the Belovèd. A true lover resteth not in the gift, but in Me above every gift. All is not lost, therefore, if at times thou feelest less devotion for Me or My Saints than thou fain wouldst feel. That good and sweet affection that thou dost sometimes experience is the effect of present grace in thee, and a foretaste of thy heavenly habitation; but hereon thou oughtest not to lean over much, for it cometh and goeth. But to strive against the evil motions of the mind, and spurn the promptings of the devil, is a notable sign of virtue, and accrueth great merit.

Therefore, whatsoever their source or nature, let no strange fancies trouble thee, but hold courageously to thy purpose and upright intention towards God. Neither is it an illusion when at times thou art suddenly rapt in ecstasy, yet presently returnest unto the accustomed vagaries of the heart; for these thou endurest rather than doest, and so long as they displease thee and thou strivest against them, will bring thee gain rather than loss.

Know well that the old Enemy doth strive by every means in his power to hinder thy desire for virtue. He would keep thee from all religious exercises, from the veneration of the Saints, from the devout commemoration of My Holy Passion, from the profitable recollection of thy sins, from the guarding of thine own heart, and from thy firm resolve to advance in goodness. He putteth into thy mind many evil thoughts by means of which he hopeth to create in thee lassitude and dread, and hold thee back from prayer and holy reading. Penitent confession is displeasing unto him; and if he could, he would make thee to cease from Communion. Trust him not, nor heed him, howsoever often he may set snares of deceit to entrap thee. When he suggesteth evil and unclean thoughts unto thee, charge him with it. Say unto him: Begone, unclean spirit! Blush for shame, thou wretch! Most foul art thou that whispereth such words in mine ears! Depart from me, wicked seducer! thou wilt have no part in me; but Jesus will be with me as a strong Defender, and thou shalt stand confounded. I would rather die and undergo any torment, than yield unto thee. Hold thy peace and be still; for though thou shouldst many times molest me, I will hearken unto thee no more. *The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? Yea, if whole armies should assail me, my heart shall fear not. The Lord is my Helper and my Redeemer.*

Fight like a good soldier; and if thou shouldst sometimes fall through frailty of the flesh, draw from Me still greater strength, putting thy trust in My abundant grace; and guard against self-complacency and pride, for by these many are lead into error, and some fall into incurable blindness of heart. Let the proud, who are thus brought low by their own presumption and folly, serve as a warning unto thee, a[illegible]eep thee ever humble.

CHAPTER 7

Of Concealing Grace under the Guard of Humility

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

MY son, it is more advantageous and more safe for thee to conceal the grace of devotion. Do not be too uplifted, nor speak much thereof, nor dwell much thereon; but rather humiliate thyself the more, and ponder whether this grace has been given to one unworthy to receive it. Yet cleave not too earnestly to this affection, which may be quickly changed to the contrary. Think, when thou art granted grace, how wretched and needy thou art wont to be when it is withdrawn.

Thy progress in the spiritual life dependeth not on how thou behavest when thou dost enjoy the grace of consolation; but on thy humility, patience and endurance when it is withheld from thee; neither must thou become listless in the exercise of prayer, nor suffer any other of thine accustomed duties to be neglected, but cheerfully perform what lieth within thee, to the best of thy power and understanding; neither allow any dryness or anxiety of mind which thou mayest feel make thee wholly negligent of thyself.

For many there are who, when things go badly with them, at once become impatient or slothful. It is not in man's power always to determine his [illegible]; it lieth with God to give and to comfort when He willeth, as much as He willeth, and to whom He willeth, just as He pleaseth, and no more. Some indiscreet persons, over-earnest in their desire for the grace of devotion, have brought ruin upon themselves; because they attempted more than they were able to perform, having no measure of their own littleness, but following rather the desires of the heart than the judgment of reason. And because they presumed to greater things than were pleasing to God, soon lost His grace. They who had aspired to build them nests in Heaven, were made helpless and outcast; to the end that, being humbled and impoverished, they might learn not to fly with their own wings, but to trust solely in My wings. Such as are yet but novices and inexperienced in the Way of the Lord, may soon be deceived and lost unless they govern themselves according to the counsel of the wise.

And if they choose to follow their own desires rather than trust others who are more experienced, and persist in their own deceit, their end will be perilous. Those who rate themselves wise can seldom, with true humility, endure to be governed by others. Better a little knowledge, held with humility, though little understanding, than great stores of learning with self-complacency. It is better for thee to have little, rather than much whereof thou mayest be proud. He acteth most indiscreetly who giveth himself wholly to joy, forgetting his former poverty, and the chaste fear of the Lord that dreadeth to lose the grace that is proffered. Nor is he valiant in mind, who, in time of adversity or depression, yields to despairing thoughts, and loseth his trust and confidence in Me.

For he that in time of peace doth rest most secure, is often dejected and afraid in time of war. If thou couldst always continue humble and modest in thine own sight, wisely directing and governing thy spirit, thou wouldst less readily fall into danger and transgression. It is good counsel when fervour of spirit is kindled within thee, that thou shouldst contemplate how it will be with thee when that light is gone. And should this happen, remember then that the light may return again, which for a time I have withdrawn as a warning to thyself and for Mine own glory.

Such trials are oftentimes more profitable than if thou wert always to have things according to thy will. For spiritual merit is to be estimated neither by the number of a man's visions and consolations, nor by his skill in the Scriptures, nor by his high station in life; but according to whether he is grounded in true humility, filled with divine love, and seeketh constantly in all things, purely and wholly, the honour of God; accounting himself as naught, despising himself, and preferring to be lowly and slighted by others rather than to be honoured by them.

CHAPTER 8

Of a Mean Estimation of Oneself in the Eyes of God

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

I WILL speak unto my Lord, though I am but dust and ashes. If I esteem myself to be anything more, lo, Thou dost confront me, and my sins bear true witness against me, the which I cannot refute. But if I abase myself acknowledging my nothingness, and rid myself of all self-esteem, reducing myself to the dust I am, Thou wilt confer Thy grace upon me, Thy light will be nigh unto my heart, and all self-esteem, be it ever so little, will be swallowed up in the valley of my own nothingness, and shall perish for ever. There Thou showest me myself, what I am, what I have been, and what I have become; for I am naught, and I knew it not. If I be left to myself, lo! I am nothing, and utterly infirm; but if Thou suddenly lookest upon me, I am forthwith made strong again, and filled with new joy: How great and marvellous a thing it is that I am so suddenly lifted up, and so benignly embraced by Thee; I, who, of mine own weight, constantly sink downward to the lowest depths.

This is the work of Thy love, that freely goeth before me, supporting me in many needs, guarding me from grievous peril, and, as I may truly say, delivering me from numberless evils. For, by perverse self-love, I lost myself; and by seeking Thee alone, and purely loving Thee, I found both myself and Thee; and by virtue of Thy love I have reduced myself even more profoundly to nought. For Thou, O Lord most sweet, dost deal with me above my deserts, and beyond all that I dare hope for or pray.

Blessèd be Thou, O my God, for although I am unworthy of all Thy blessings, yet Thy noble bounty and infinite goodness never ceaseth to benefit even the most ungrateful of thy children, and those who have wandered far from Thee. Convert us, Lord, to Thee, that we may be humble, thankful and devout; for Thou art our Salvation, our Courage, and our Strength.

CHAPTER 9

That all Things are to be Referred unto God, as Their Last End

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

MY son, I must be thy supreme and final End, if thou truly desire to be blessed. This intention will purify thy love, which is too often inordinately inclined to self and created things. For if thou seekest thyself in anything, presently thou failest inwardly, and driest up. Therefore thou shouldst refer all things unto Me, for I am He Who hath given all things. Consider every thing as welling from the Highest Good; therefore unto Me, as their Source, all must return.

From Me, as from a living fountain, both small and great, poor and rich, draw the water of life; and they that serve

Me willingly and gladly shall receive grace for grace. But he that would glory in aught but Me, [illegible]keth pleasure in any personal good, wilt never be established in true joy, nor be enlarged in his heart, but will be encumbered and straitened in many ways. Thou oughtest therefore to ascribe nothing of good to thyself, nor attribute virtue to any man; but give all unto God, without Whom man hath nothing. I have given all, and I would have all again; and with great strictness do I require thee to return thanks.

This is the truth whereby vainglory is put to flight. And if heavenly grace and true charity enter in, there shall be neither envy nor narrowness of heart, nor will self-love be found there. For divine love overcometh all things, and enlargeth all the powers of the soul. If thou art truly wise, thou wilt rejoice in Me alone; in Me only wilt thou trust; for none is good save God alone, Who is to be praised above all things and blessed in all things.

CHAPTER 10

That it is Sweet to Renounce the World and to Serve God

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

Now will I speak again, O Lord, and not be silent; I will say in the hearing of my God, my Lord and my King, Who dwelleth on high: *O how great is the multitude of Thy sweetness, O Lord, which thou hast laid up for them* *that fear Thee.* But what art Thou to those who love Thee? What to those who serve Thee with their whole heart? The sweetness of contemplating Thee, which Thou bestowest upon them that love Thee, is truly inexpressible. Herein, above all, Thou hast shown me the sweetness of Thy love, in that when I had no being, Thou madest me, and when I had strayed far from Thee, Thou broughtest me back again, that I might serve Thee; and Thou commandest me to love Thee.

O Fountain of love everlasting, what shall I say concerning Thee? How can I forget Thee, Who hast vouchsafed to remember me, yea, even though I was corrupted and lost? Thou hast shown mercy to Thy servant beyond all expectation; and bestowed Thy grace and loving-kindness beyond all deserving. What return shall I make unto Thee for this grace? For it is not granted to all to forsake all, to renounce the world, and to undertake the monastic life. Is it any great thing that I should serve Thee, Whom the whole creation is bound to serve? It ought not to appear much to *me* to serve *Thee;* but it seemeth to me great and wonderful, that thou, O Lord, vouchsafest to receive into Thy service one so poor and unworthy, and makest him one with Thy belovèd servants.

Behold, all that I possess, all things whereby I serve Thee, are Thine. And yet, contrariwise, Thou servest me, rather than I Thee. Lo! heaven and earth, which Thou hast created for the service of man, stand ready to obey, and do daily perform whatsoever Thou commandest. And this is but little; for Thou hast also appointed Angels to minister to man. But that which excelleth all, is that Thou

Thyself hast vouchsafed to serve man, and hast promised that Thou wilt give Thyself unto him.

What shall I render unto Thee for these numerous benefits? Would that I could serve Thee all the days of my life! Would that I were able, if only for one day, to render Thee some worthy service! Verily, Thou art worthy of all service, of all honour, and of eternal praise. Truly Thou art my Lord, and I Thy poor servant, who am bound to serve Thee with all my strength, and never to weary of praising Thee. This I will to do; this is my desire; and whatever is lacking in me, do Thou, I beseech Thee, vouchsafe to supply.

It is great honour, and great glory, to serve Thee, and to despise all things for Thy sake; and great grace will be given unto them that willingly subject themselves to Thy most holy service. They who, for love of Thee, renounce all carnal pleasures, shall receive the most sweet consolation of the Holy Spirit. They who, for Thy Name's sake, enter into the narrow way, putting from them all worldly cares, shall attain great freedom of mind.

O sweet and delightful service of God, by which a man is made truly free and holy! O sacred state of religious servitude, which maketh man the equal of the Angels, pleasing to God, terrible to devils, and worthy to be commended to all the faithful! O most welcome service, ever to be embraced and desired, whereby we are rewarded with the Highest Good, and attain to joy that abideth with us for ever!

CHAPTER II

That the Desires of our Heart are to be Examined and Moderated

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

MY son, thou must still learn many things which thou hast not yet well learned.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

What are these, Lord?

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

That thy desires must conform wholly to My good pleasure; and that thou be not a lover of self but an earnest follower of My will. Desires oftentimes inflame and violently impel thee; and thou doest well to consider whether thou art actuated more by thine own self-interest rather than by My honour. If I Myself be the cause, thou wilt be well content with whatsoever I shall ordain; but if there lurk hidden in thee any self-seeking, this will retard thy good purpose and weigh thee down.

Take care, therefore, not to rely too much upon any preconceived desire without first seeking My counsel, lest perhaps afterwards thou repent thee, or be displeased with that which at first gave thee pleasure, and which thou so earnestly sought for as being the best. For not every inclination which seemeth good to thee should at once be obeyed; nor should every contrary emotion at once be avoided. It is sometimes expedient to restrain even thy good desires and endeavours, lest by importu[illegible] thou fall into distraction of mind; or, lacking self-discipline, thou bring scandal upon others; or, again, being by others thwarted and resisted, thou become suddenly confused, and fall back.

Sometimes, indeed, thou must resort to violence, and manfully resist thy sensual appetite, paying no heed to what the flesh liketh or disliketh, but sternly resolved that, even against its will, it be made subject to the spirit. Moreover, the flesh must be chastised and kept under servitude until it hath learned obedience in all things, is contented with few things, and taketh delight in simple things. Nor must it murmur against such things as are troublesome and inconvenient.

CHAPTER 12

Of the Growth of Patience in the Soul, and of the Striving against Concupiscence

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

O LORD GOD, I perceive that patience is very necessary for me, for in this world many things go contrary unto us; and whatsoever plans I may devise for my own peace, my life cannot be without strife and sorrow.

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

My son, it is as thou sayest. But My will is that thou seek not to escape temptation and adversity; rather consider that thou hast found peace when thou art beset by diverse tribulations, and tried by many afflictions.

If thou say that thou art unable to suffer much, how, then, wilt thou endure the fire of Purgatory? Of two evils, the lesser should always be chosen. Therefore, if thou wouldst escape eternal punishment hereafter, thou must endeavour to endure patiently for God, the evils of this life. Thinkest thou that worldly men suffer nothing or but a little? Ask even of those who enjoy great luxury and thou shalt not find it so. But, thou sayest, these follow their own will and pleasure, savouring to the full the delight of the world, and paying small heed to their afflictions. Be it so; they do whatsoever they will and possess whatsoever they desire; but how long thinkest thou this will last?

Behold, the rich of this world will vanish away like smoke' and none will remember their past joys! Nay, even while they yet live, they are the victims of bitterness, weariness and fear; for the very things in which they find delight, oftentimes bring them pain and sorrow. It is therefore only just, that having inordinately sought and indulged in pleasures, they should not enjoy them without shame and bitterness.

O, how brief and inordinate, how false and degrading are all such pleasures! Yet so blind and besotted are men, that they understand not; but, like dumb beasts, for the vulgar enjoyments of this mortal life, even incur the death of the Soul. *Therefore, My son, go not after thy lusts, but from thine own will refrain thyself. Delight in the Lord, and He shall give thee the requests of thine heart.*

If thou wouldst taste true delight, and enjoy the fullness of My comfort, hold in contempt all things worldly, cleanse thy heart of all base pleasures, and thou shalt be blessed with abundant consolation. And the more thou withdrawest thyself from all solace of creatures, the sweeter and stronger consolation wilt thou find in Me. But thou wilt not attain to these quickly, but only through sorrow and laborious conflict. Evil habits create resistance, and by good habits must be overcome. The flesh will murmur against thee, and thou must bridle it with the fervency of the Spirit. The Old Serpent will incite and trouble thee, but by prayer he will be put to flight, and by perseverance in well-doing thou wilt hold him at bay.

CHAPTER 13

Of the Obedience of a Humble Subject, after the Example of Jesus Christ

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

My son, he that endeavoureth to withdraw himself from obedience, withdraweth himself from grace; and he who seeketh for himself personal benefits, loseth those which are common to all. When a man doth not willingly and gladly submit himself to his superior, it is a sign that the flesh is not as yet perfectly obedient unto his will, but oftentimes rebelleth and striveth against him. Learn therefore promptly to obey thy superior, if thou are resolved that thy flesh shall obey thee; for the outward enemy is more speedily overcome if the inward man be not laid waste. There is no worse or more grievous enemy to the soul than thou thyself when out of harmony with the Spirit. It is most needful, therefore, that thou attain a true contempt for thyself, if thou wouldst prevail against flesh and blood.

But as yet thou lovest thyself too inordinately, therefore art thou fearful to resign thyself wholly to the will of others. Yet what great matter is it if thou, who art but dust and nothingness, subject thyself to man for the sake of God, when I, the Almighty and Most High, Who created all things from nothing, humbly subjected Myself to man for thy sake? I became of all men the most meek and lowly, that thou mightest overcome thy pride by My humility. O dust, learn to be obedient! Learn to humble thyself, O earth and clay! and to place thyself under the feet of all. Learn to conquer thine own will, and to yield thyself to all subjection.

Be vehement against thyself, suffering no vain pride to dwell in thee; but show thyself to be so submissive and negligible that all may trample over thee, and tread thee down as the mire of the streets. Vain man, what hast thou to complain of? Foul sinner, what answer canst thou give to them that reproach thee; thou who hast so often offended God, and so many times deserved hell? Yet Mine eye hath spared thee, for thy soul was precious in My sight; that thou mightest know My love, and be ever thankful for My benefits: and that thou mightest continually apply thyself to true subjection and humility, enduring patiently thine own contempt.

CHAPTER 14

Of Considering the Secret Judgments of God, that We be not Puffed Up with our Own Good Works

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

O LORD, Thou thunderest forth Thy judgments over me. My bones shake with fear and trembling, and my soul is exceedingly afraid. I stand dumbfounded, and reflect that even the Heavens are not pure in Thy sight. If Thou found wickedness in the Angels, and didst not spare them, what will become of me? Stars fell from heaven; what then can I, who am but dust, hope for? They whose works seem laudable have fallen to the lowest depths; and they that did eat the Bread of Angels I have seen revelling in the husks of swine.

Lord, there is no sanctity, if Thou withdraw Thy hand. No wisdom availeth, if Thou cease to guide. No courage helpeth, if Thou cease to defend. No chastity is secure, if Thou protect it not. No guard of ours sufficeth, if Thy holy vigilance be not with us. If Thou forsake us we sink and perish; if Thou visit us we are raised up and live. By Thee our unsteadfastness is strengthened; through Thee our feeble hearts are set aflame.

O how humbly and abjectly ought I to think of myself; how little ought I to esteem any goodness that I may possess. O Lord, with what profound humility ought I to submit myself to Thine unfathomable judgments; for I find myself to be nothing else than nothing, and still nothing! O might immeasurable! O sea impassable! wherein I discover nothing of myself save only and wholly nothing! Where now is the lurking-place of pride and vainglory? Where now the confidence conceived of mine own virtue? All pride is swallowed up in the depth of Thy judgments upon me.

What is all flesh in Thy sight? Shall the clay glory against Him that fashioned it? How can he whose heart is truly subject to God, be lifted up with boastful words? The whole world cannot exalt him whom the Truth hath made subject unto itself. Neither will he whose whole hope is placed in God, be moved by the tongues of those who praise him. For they who speak thus are even as nothing, and will pass away with the sound of their own words. But the Truth of the Lord abideth for ever.

CHAPTER 15

In Every Thing which We Desire, How We ought to Stand Affected, and What We ought to say

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

MY son, pray thou thus at all times: "Lord, if this be pleasing unto Thee, so let it be. Lord, if it be to Thine honour, in Thy name let it be done. Lord, if Thou seest that it is expedient, and approvest it as profitable to my soul, grant that I may use it to Thine honour. But if Thou knowest it will be hurtful unto me, and imperil the health of my soul, extinguish thou in me any such desire." For not every desire proceedeth from the Holy Spirit, though to man it seemeth right and good. It is hard to judge truly whether it be a good or evil spirit that induceth thee to desire this or that; or whether thou be moved thereunto by thine own spirit. Many who, in the beginning, seemed to be led by a good Spirit, have been deceived in the end.

Therefore, whatever thy mind conceiveth to be desirable, must always be desired and prayed for in the fear of God, and with humility of heart; above all thou oughtest, with humble self-resignation, to commit the whole matter to Me, saying: "O Lord, Thou knowest what is best for me, let this or that be done, not as I, but as Thou shalt determine. Give what Thou wilt, and as much as Thou wilt, and when Thou wilt. Deal with me as Thou wilt, and as best pleaseth thee, and as is most for Thine honour. Set me where Thou wilt, and deal freely with me in all things. I am in Thy hand; turn me this way and that as Thou choosest. Lo, I am Thy servant, and prepared for all things; for I desire to live not unto myself, but unto Thee. O, that I could do this worthily and perfectly!"

A Prayer that the Will of God may be Fulfilled

O MOST merciful Jesus, grant me Thy grace, that it may be with me, and inspire me, and abide with me unto the end. Grant me ever to will and to desire that which is most pleasing and acceptable unto Thee. Let

Thy will be my will, and let my will ever follow and be in perfect accord with Thine. So that in all things I am at one with what thou willest or willest not.

Grant that I may die to all earthly things, and, for Thy sake, love to be despised and unknown. Grant unto me above all to rest in Thee, that my heart may enjoy Thy peace. Thou art the true peace of the heart; Thou art its only rest; apart from Thee all things are hard and restless. In this peace, in this self-same thing, that is, in Thee, the One Sovereign Eternal Good, I will sleep and rest. Amen.

CHAPTER 16

That True Consolation is to be Sought in God Alone

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

WHATSOEVER I may imagine or wish for my consolation, I look for not here but hereafter. For even if I had all the comforts of the world, and were able to enjoy the delights thereof, certain it is that they would soon perish. Therefore, O my soul, thou wilt never be fully comforted, nor perfectly refreshed, except in God alone, the Consoler of the poor and the Patron of the humble. Abide a little while, O my soul; wait for the fulfilment of the divine promise, and thou wilt have abundance of all good things in heaven. If thou value inordinately the good things of this life, thou wilt lose those that are heavenly and eternal. Use temporal things, but desire eternal things. Thou wert not created to enjoy temporal possession, and wilt never find satisfaction in them.

Yea, wert thou to possess all created goods, thou wouldst be neither happy nor blessèd. In God alone, Who created all things, wilt thou find true blessedness and felicity. Not such as is seen and praised by the foolish lovers of the world, but such as the good and faithful servants of Christ do wait for, and which the spiritual and pure in heart, whose thoughts are of heaven, do sometimes foretaste. Vain and brief is all human consolation; but blessèd and true is the solace that cometh from the inward perception of Truth. A devout man carrieth ever with him Jesus his Comforter, and sayeth unto Him: "Be Thou present with me, Lord, in every time and place. Let this, then, be my consolation: to be cheerfully willing to forgo all human comfort. And if Thy consolation be withdrawn, let Thy will, and just probation be as the greatest of comforts unto me; for Thou wilt not always be angry, neither wilt Thou threaten forever."

CHAPTER 17

That all our Anxieties are to be Placed on God

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

MY son, suffer Me to do with thee what I wilt, for I know what is must expedient for thee. Thou thinkest as man, and judgest of many things according to how emotion doth sway thee.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:
Lord, what Thou sayest is true. Thine anxiety for me is greater far than all the care that I can take for myself: for he who placeth not all his cares upon Thee standeth most insecurely. Lord, if only my will remain right and steadfast towards Thee, do with me whatsoever Thou pleasest; for whatsoever Thou decidest will be for my good. If Thou willest that I should be in darkness, blessèd be Thou; and if Thou willest that I should be in light, again be Thou blessèd. If Thou vouchsafe to comfort me, blessèd be Thy name; and if Thou willest that I should be afflicted, still be Thou ever blessèd.

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:
My son, such must be thy state if thou desirest to walk with Me. Thou oughtest to be as ready to suffer as to rejoice; as willing to be destitute and poor, as endowed with riches.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:
Lord, I will gladly bear for Thee whatsoever Thou art pleased to send me. From Thy hand I am willing to receive at Thy bidding good and evil, sweet and bitter, joy and sorrow; and to give Thee thanks for all that may befall me. Keep me from all manner of sin, and I shall fear neither death nor hell. Lord, cast me not from Thee forever, nor blot me out of the book of life, and whatsoever tribulation may come upon me shall hurt me not.

CHAPTER 18

That Temporal Ills are to be Borne Patiently, after the Example of Christ

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

MY son, I came down from Heaven for thy salvation; I took upon Me thy miseries, not of necessity, but because of My love; that thou mightest learn patience and bear temporal ills without repining. For from the hour of My Birth until that of My Death on the Cross, I was never without suffering and sorrow. I had great lack of things temporal; I heard many complain against Me; I endured meekly shame and revilings. For benefits, I received ingratitude; for miracles, blasphemies, for heavenly teaching, censure and reproof.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

O Lord, for that Thou wert patient in Thy life-time, herein especially fulfilling the commandment of Thy Father, it is right that I, a wretched sinner, should bear myself patiently in accordance with Thy will, and, for my soul's welfare, endure the burden of this corruptible life for as long as Thou shalt determine. For although this present life be onerous and burdensome, yet by virtue of Thy grace it is now made purposeful, and by Thine example and that of Thy saints, more bright and supportable to the weak. Moreover it hath more of consolation than was given under the old Law, when the gate of Heaven was yet closed, and the way thither more dark; for then few desired and sought the Kingdom of Heaven, nor, before Thy Passion and the Atonement of Thy sacred Death, could they who were righteous and destined to be saved, enter the Heavenly kingdom.

O, what great thanks am I bound to render unto Thee, for that Thou hast vouchsafed to show unto me and to all the faithful, the good and right way to Thine eternal kingdom! For Thy life is our way; and by holy patience we walk towards Thee, Who art our Crown. If Thou, Lord, hadst not gone before and taught us the way, who would have followed Thee therein? Many would fall behind and remain afar off but for the inspiration of Thy glorious example!

Behold, though we have heard many times of Thy wonders and teachings, we still lack the fire of the Spirit. What, then, would befall us had we not this great light whereby to follow Thee?

CHAPTER 19

Of the Endurance of Injuries, and the Proof of True Patience

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

WHAT is it thou sayest, my son? Cease thy complaining, and consider My Passion and the ordeals of the Saints. Thou hast not yet resisted unto the shedding of blood. Thou sufferest but little in comparison with those who endured so much, who wert so strongly tempted, so grievously afflicted, so many ways tried and tested. Thou oughtest therefore to call to mind these greater sufferings so that thou mayest the more easily bear thine own small troubles. And if these seem great to thee, ask thyself whether thine impatience be the cause thereof. But whether they be small or great, thou oughtest to endeavour patiently to suffer them all.

The better thou disposest thyself to suffering, the wiser will be thine actions, and the greater thy merit; and if both in heart and habit thou diligently prepare thyself thereunto, the more easily wilt thou endure all things. Do not say: I cannot endure to suffer these things at the hands of such an one, nor ought I to be called upon to do so; for he hath done me great wrong, and hath accused me of things which I never thought of; but for another I will gladly suffer whatever may befall. Such thoughts are foolish, for they disregard both the virtue of patience, and the crown that God awardeth for that virtue. They take too great account of persons and of injuries suffered by thyself.

He who is willing to endure only what he himself decreeth, and from persons he chooseth, hath not true patience; for the truly patient man mindeth not by whom he is tried; whether by his own superior, or by one equal or inferior to him; whether by a good and holy man, or by one that is perverse and worthless. But however often, or in whatever degree, adversity shall befall him, or from whatsoever source it may come, he accepteth all with thankfulness and equanimity, as from the hand of God, and accounteth it great gain. For no trials, however small, if thou suffer them for God, shall go unrewarded.

Be thou, therefore, prepared and eager for the fight, if thou wouldst gain the victory. If thou willest not to suffer, thou refusest to be crowned. If thou wouldst win the crown, fight manfully, and endure patiently; for without labour, there can be no rest; without combat, no victory.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:
O Lord, make possible by Thy grace, that which seemeth impossible to me by nature. Thou knowest that I am able to endure but little suffering, and that I am overthrown by even a slight adversity. Grant, O Lord, that evey trial and tribulation may become lovable and desirable to me for Thy Name's sake. For to be tested and to suffer for Thee, is most healthful to my soul.

CHAPTER 20

Of the Confession of our own Infirmity; and of the Miseries of this Life

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:
I WILL confess against myself mine own unrighteousness. To thee, O Lord, will I acknowledge my weakness. Oftentimes it is but a little thing that causeth me to be dejected and troubled. I resolve to meet evil courageously, but when even a small temptation cometh, I am in sore straits. That which seemeth trifling sometimes giveth rise to a grievous temptation; and when I think myself to be

secure, and least expect it, I am overcome by a light breath.

Behold, therefore, O Lord, my low estate and my frailty, which are in every way known unto Thee. Have mercy upon me, and deliver me out of the mire, that I may sink not therein, nor be utterly cast down for ever. This it is that so often retardeth me, and confoundeth me in Thy sight; that I am so prone to fall, so weak in resisting my passions. And although I do not altogether consent, yet their onslaughts are grievous and burdensome unto me, and it greatly wearieth me to live thus in daily conflict. By this means I discern my infirmity: that evil and hateful fantasies do more easily enter my mind than they depart from it.

Most mighty God of Israel, zealous lover of faithful souls! behold, I beseech Thee, the labour and sorrow of Thy servant, and support him in whatsoever he undertaketh. Strengthen me with heavenly endurance, lest that old and cunning enemy the flesh, not as yet fully subject to the Spirit, prevail over and rule me; and against which I must do battle as long as I draw breath in this miserable life. Alas! what kind of life is this, in which trials and afflictions never cease; where snares and enemies everywhere abound? Behold, when one temptation or tribulation recedeth, another approacheth; yea, even while we are engaged in one conflict, others come upon us unawares.

How, then, can man love a life that holdeth so much bitterness, and is subject to so much misery and mischance? How, even, can it be called life, that engendereth so many deaths and pestilences? Yet it is the object of man's love, and many seek delight therein. The world is oftentimes blamed for its falseness and vanity, yet men do not lightly forsake it, for the desires of the flesh have great dominion.

But some things draw us to love the world; others to despise it. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, all draw us to the love of the world; but the pains and miseries that are the just retribution of these delights, arouse in us a hatred of the world and a weariness thereof.

But alas! the allurement of false pleasures overcometh the mind addicted to such; and it esteemeth delight to be under thorns;[1] because it neither seeth nor tasteth the sweetness of God, and the inward harmony of virtue. But they who perfectly despise the world and study to live to God under holy discipline, these are not unaware of the Divine sweetness that is promised to all who truly renounce the world. They see clearly the errant folly of the world, and in how many ways it is deceived.

CHAPTER 21

That We are to Rest in God above all things which are Good, and above all His own Gifts

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

ABOVE all things, and in all things, O my soul, rest thou ever in the Lord, for He is the everlasting Rest of the Saints.

Grant me, O most sweet and loving Jesus, to rest in Thee above all created things; above all health and beauty; above all glory and honour; above all power and dignity; above all knowledge and subtlety; above all rich[illegible] and arts; above all joy and gladness; above all fame and praise; above all sweetness and consolation; above all hope and promise; above all merit and desire; above all gifts that Thou canst give and impart; above all mirth and jubilation that the mind of man can receive and feel; furthermore, above Angels and Archangels, and above all the host of Heaven; above all things visible and invisible; and above all things that art not Thee, my God.

For Thou, O Lord my God, art supreme above all. Thou alone art most high; Thou alone most powerful; Thou alone most full and sufficient; Thou alone most sweet and most full of consolation; Thou alone most beautiful and most loving; Thou alone most noble and most glorious above all things; in Whom every good and perfect thing existeth, now and for ever. All, therefore, that Thou bestowest upon me other than Thyself, or revealest or promisest unto me concerning Thyself, is small and unsatisfying, unless I can see and fully possess Thee. For my heart cannot truly rest, nor will it find spiritual contentment, until it rest in Thee, transcending every gift and every creature.

O Thou most sweet spouse of my soul Jesus Christ, Thou most pure Lover, Lord of all creation! Who wilt give me the wings of true liberty, that I may fly to and find rest in Thee! O, when will this spiritual grace be granted unto me, that in quietness of mind, I may see how sweet Thou art, O Lord my God? When shall I become one with Thee? When, because of my ardent love, I will no longer be conscious of self, but of Thee alone; above all feeling and [illegible]asure, in a manner not known unto all? But now I oftentimes sigh and bear my unhappiness with sorrow; for, in this vale of tears, there happeneth many evil things which do grieve and trouble me, darken my path, distract and entangle me, so that I neither have free access to Thee, nor enjoy the sweet embraces that are the reward of blessèd spirits. O Lord, be moved, I pray Thee, by my sighs and my manifold sorrows here upon the earth.

O Jesus, Thou brightness of everlasting glory, Thou comfort of the pilgrim soul; with Thee my mouth is dumb; my silence speaketh unto Thee. How long doth My Lord tarry ere he come? Let Him come unto me, His poor servant, and make him joyful. Let Him put forth His hand and deliver me, a wretched soul from anguish. Come, O come! for without Thee there can be no blissful day or hour; for Thou art my joy, and without Thee my table is empty. Wretched am I, imprisoned and grievously fettered, until Thou dost refresh me with the light of Thy presence, settest me free, and showest me Thy friendly countenance.

Let others seek what they please instead of Thee; but as for me, nothing else doth nor shall delight me, but Thou only, my God, my hope, my eternal salvation. I will not old my peace, nor shall I cease to pray, till Thy grace return, and Thou speakest inwardly unto me.

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

Lo, I am here; Lo, I am come to thee; for thou callest Me inwardly. Thy tears, and the desire of thy soul, thy humiliation and contrition of heart, have moved and brought Me unto thee.

The Voice of the Disciple:

And I said: O Lord, I have called upon Thee inwardly, my heart longeth for Thee. I am ready to forsake all things for Thy sake. Truly Thou hast stirred me up to seek Thee. Wherefore blessèd be Thou O Lord, Who hast shown this goodness to Thy servant, according to the multitude of Thy mercies.

What more hath Thy servant to say, O Lord, in Thy presence? He humbleth himself greatly before Thee, ever mindful of his own wickedness and unworthiness. For there is none like unto Thee in all the innumerable wonders of Heaven and earth. Thy works are excellent, Thy judgments true, and by Thy providence all things are governed. Praise, therefore, and glory be unto Thee, O Wisdom of the Father! Let my mouth, my soul, and all creation, join to praise and bless Thee.

CHAPTER 22

Of the Remembrance of God's manifold Benefits

The Voice of the Disciple:

OPEN, O Lord, my heart in Thy law, and teach me to walk in Thy commandments. Grant me to understand Thy will, and, with great reverence and diligent thought, to remember all Thy benefits, as well in general as in particular, that henceforward I may be able worthily to give Thee thanks. I know, and do confess, that I am unable to thank Thee as Thou deservest even for the least of the many favours Thou bestowest upon me. Lord, I am less than the least of Thy gifts; and when I consider Thine excellence, the greatness thereof maketh my spirit to faint.

All that we have in soul and body, and whatsoever we possess outwardly or inwardly, naturally or supernaturally, are Thy gifts, and do proclaim Thee bountiful, merciful and good. From Thee alone cometh all good things. And although one hath received more and another less, yet all are Thine; without Thee we cannot receive even the least of Thy blessings. He that hath received Thy greater gifts, cannot glory of his own merit, nor extol himself above others, nor despise those whose endowments are less; for he who ascribeth least unto himself is the greatest and best, and in rendering thanks, the most humble and devout. And he that esteemeth himself meaner than all others, and judgeth himself to be the least worthy, is fittest to receive still greater blessings.

But he that hath received fewer ought not to be disheartened, nor feel indignant or envious of those that are more richly endowed; but should rather turn his mind to Thee, and greatly praise Thy goodness, for that Thou bestowest Thy gifts so generously, so freely and so willingly without respect of persons. All things proceed from Thee, therefore Thou art to be praised in all things. Thou knowest what is expedient to be given to every one. Why one should have less and another more, is not within the powers of man's judgment, but is decreed by Thee, Who alone hath knowledge of, and can determine with exactitude, the merits of each.

Wherefore, O Lord God, I account it a great blessing that I have few things which outwardly and in the opinion of men, seemeth glorious and praiseworthy. Thus he who giveth thought to his own poverty and unworthiness should feel neither grief nor despondency thereat; rather should he take comfort and be glad. For Thou, O God, hast chosen the poor, the humble and the despised of this world for Thy familiar friends and servants. Witness Thy Apostles, whom Thou madest princes over all the earth; yet they lived in this world without complaint; so humble and simple, so devoid of all malice and guile, that they even rejoiced to suffer reproaches and wrongs for Thy Name; and what the world avoided, they embraced with great affection.

Nothing ought so to rejoice him who loveth Thee and acknowledgeth Thy benefits, as that Thy divine will and purpose be accomplished in him, and the good pleasure of Thine eternal decrees. And in this he ought to be so happy and comforted, that he would as willingly be the least as the greatest; as contented in the lowest place as in the highest; as willing to be a despised outcast of no name or repute, as to be more honoured than all others, and more exalted in the world than they. For Thy will and the love of Thine honour ought to be preferred before all else, and to give greater consolation and pleasure than all other benefits that have been given, or can be given.

CHAPTER 23

Of Four Things that bring much Inward Peace

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:
MY son, I will now teach thee the way of peace and true freedom.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:
O Lord, do as Thou sayest, for I delight to hear Thy voice.

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:
Study, my son, to do the will of another, rather than thine own. Choose always to have less rather than more. Seek always the lowest place, and to be submissive to all. Desire ever, and pray, that the will of God may be wholly fulfilled in thee. Behold, such an one entereth an haven of peace and rest.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:
O Lord, Thy short discourse containeth within itself much perfection. Thou hast spoken but a few words, but they are full of meaning, and contain much fruit. O that I could faithfully observe them, for then I should not be so easily troubled. For as often as I feel myself disquieted and depressed, I find that I have gone back from this doctrine. But Thou, O Lord, Who canst do all things, and Who ever delighteth in the advancement of man's soul, grant

me, I pray Thee, an increase of Thy grace, that I may be able to fulfil Thy words, and work out mine own salvation.

A Prayer against Evil Thoughts

O LORD My God, be not Thou far from me; My God, have regard to help me: for vain thoughts and great fears have risen up against me, and afflict my soul. How shall I pass through unharmed? How shall I break them to pieces? *I will go before thee,* sayeth He, *and will humble the great ones of the earth; I will open the gates of the prison, and reveal unto thee My innermost secrets.* Do, even as Thou sayest, O Lord, and let all evil thoughts fly from before Thy face. This is my hope, my one consolation, to flee unto Thee in every tribulation, to trust in Thee, to call upon Thee from my inmost heart, and patiently to await Thy consolation.

A Prayer for Enlightment of the Mind

O GOOD Jesus, enlighten me with the brightness of Thine inward light, and remove from the sanctuary of my heart all manner of darkness. Restrain my wayward thoughts, and destroy the temptations that so vehemently attack me. Fight mightily for me, and drive out the perilous desires of the flesh that assail me like evil beasts; that peace may be restored by Thy virtue and power, and that abundant praise may resound to Thee in Thy holy court, the court of a pure conscience. Command Thou the winds and tempests; say unto the sea: Be still, and to the north wind: Blow not; and there shall be a great calm.

Send out Thy light and Thy truth that they may shine upon the earth; for unless Thou enlighten me, I am as earth that is empty and void. Pour forth Thy grace from above; bathe my heart in Thy heavenly dew; send fresh streams of devotion to water the face of the earth, that it may bring forth good and perfect fruit. Uplift my mind, weighed down with a heavy burden of sin, and raise my whole desire to heavenly things; that having once tasted the sweetness of supernal joy, my mind may turn away from the contemplation of earthly things.

Snatch me away, and deliver me from all transitory consolation of creatures; for no created thing can fully comfort me, or appease my desires. Join me to Thee with an inseparable bond of love; for Thou alone dost satisfy the soul that loveth Thee. Without Thee, all things are worthless.

CHAPTER 24

Of Avoiding Curious Inquiry into Other Men's Lives

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

MY son, be not curious, nor trouble thyself with idle matters. What is this or that to thee? Follow thou Me. What is it to thee whether this person be such and such, or what that person doeth or sayeth? Thou wilt not be called upon to answer for others, but to give an account of thyself. Why, then, dost thou entangle thyself? Lo, I know all men, and do see all things that are done under the sun. I know how it is with each; what he thinketh what he desireth, and to what end are his intentions. Therefore commit all things unto me; and keep thyself in God's peace, and let the unquiet be as unquiet as he will. Whatsoever he may do or say will recoil upon him, for Me he cannot deceive.

Seek not the shadow of a great name, nor the familiar friendship of many, nor the personal love of individuals; for these engender distractions, and great darkness of heart. I would gladly speak My word unto thee, and reveal My secrets, if thou wouldst diligently observe My coming, and open unto Me the door of thine heart. Be thou ready; watchful in prayer; and humble thyself in all things.

CHAPTER 25

In what Firm Peace of Heart and True Spiritual Progress Consisteth

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

MY son, I have spoken: *Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you.* All men desire peace but all liketh not the things that appertain unto true peace. My peace is with the humble and gentle of heart; thy peace will be the fruit of much patience. If thou wilt hearken unto My voice and follow Me, thou shalt live in great peace.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:
Lord, what, then, shall I do?

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:
In everything take heed to thyself; what thou doest, and what thou sayest, and direct thy whole attention to one purpose—that thou mayest please Me alone, desiring nothing, nor seeking anything besides Me. But as to the words and deeds of others, judge nothing rashly; nor do thou entangle thyself with things not committed to thy care; behave thus, and thou shalt be but little or seldom perturbed.

But never to experience disquiet, nor to suffer any anxiety of heart or body, belongeth not to this life, but to the state of everlasting Rest. Think not, therefore, that thou hast found true peace, if thou feel no grief; nor that all is well, if none oppose thee; nor that thou hast attained perfection when all things are done according to thy will and pleasure. Neither highly esteem thyself, nor account thyself to be especially beloved of God if thou be in a state of great devotion and sweetness; for it is not by things such as these that a true lover of virtue is known, nor doth a man's spiritual progress and perfection consist in them.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:
Wherein then, Lord, doth it consist?

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

In offering thyself with thy whole heart to the Divine Will; seeking not thine own way whether in small matters or great, either in time or in eternity. So that with one-pointedness thou mayest continue to give thanks both in prosperity and in adversity, weighing all things in an even balance. If thou art so courageous, and thy hope so long-suffering, that when all manner of inward consolation is withdrawn, thou preparest thy heart to suffer even greater trials; and dost not justify thyself, as though thou oughtest not to suffer so great afflictions, but justify Me in whatsoever I appoint, and praise My Holy Name; then shalt thou walk in the true and right way of peace, and thou mayest hold the certain hope that thou wilt see My face again with great joy. And if thou attain to the full contempt of self, be assured that thou wilt then enjoy an abundance of peace as great as any man can experience while on this earthly pilgrimage.

CHAPTER 26

Of the Excellency of a Free Mind, which is sooner Acquired by Humble Prayer than by Study

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

O LORD, the task of a perfect man is never to allow the mind to be diverted from heavenly things, and amidst many cares, to press forward, as it were, carefree; not as one oblivious of what is needful, but, by the prerogative of a free mind, cleaving to no created thing with inordinate affection.

O God most gracious, I beseech Thee to preserve me from the cares of the world, that I may not become entangled therein; and from the many necessities of the body lest I should be ensnared by pleasure; also from all the evils that beset the soul, that I be not broken with anxieties and cast down. I speak not of those things which worldly vanity so earnestly coveteth, but of those miseries which are the penalty and curse common to our mortality, and which do burden and impede the soul of Thy servant so that he cannot enter into the freedom of the Spirit as often as it would.

O God of ineffable sweetness, turn to bitterness all carnal consolations that draweth me away from the love of things eternal, and wickedly allureth me by the vision of some present delectable good. O God, let not flesh and blood overcome me; let not the world and the transitory glory thereof deceive me; let not the wiles and cunning of the Devil overwhelm me. Grant me strength to resist, patience to endure, and constancy to persevere. Give me, instead of any worldly consolation, the most sweet unction of Thy Spirit, and in place of carnal love, instil me with the love of Thy Name.

Behold, food, drink, raiment, and whatsoever appertaineth to the maintenance of the body, are onerous to the fervent spirit. Grant that I may use them with moderation, and deliver me from the entanglements of inordinate desire. To cast away all such is not lawful, for nature must be sustained. But to crave superfluities, and things for my delight, Thy Holy Law forbiddeth; for the flesh would then rebel against the spirit. Herein, O Lord, I pray that Thy hand will govern me and teach me temperance in all things.

CHAPTER 27

That it is Self-Love which most Hindereth from the Sovereign Good

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

MY son, it behoveth thee to give all for All, and to keep nothing for thyself. Know that love of thyself doth thee more hurt than anything in the world. Things cleave to thee, and hold thee enslaved, according to the love and feeling that thou hast for them. If thy love be pure, simple, and well-ordered, thou wilt be free from the bondage of earthly things. Covet not that which thou mayest not have; desire not that which hindereth and depriveth thee of thine inward freedom. Strange it is that thou committest not thyself wholly unto Me from the depth of thy heart, with all things that thou canst desire or possess.

Why dost thou consume thyself with vain regrets? Why weary thyself with superfluous cares? Hold fast to My goodwill, and thou wilt suffer no loss. If thou seekest this or that, and wouldst be here or there the better to enjoy thine own profit and pleasure, thou wilt never find rest or freedom from anxiety; for everything will have some defect, and everywhere thou wilt find someone who will oppose and ve[illegible] thee.

Man's welfare lieth not in obtaining and multiplying worldly possessions, but rather in despising them and rooting them from the heart. Furthermore, thou must understand that this applies not to wealth and riches only, but also to ambition, the coveting of honours, and the desire for vain praise, all of which are transient and perishable. The place availeth little if fervour of spirit be wanting; neither shall that peace which is sought from without long continue. Unless thy heart hath a sure foundation, that is, unless thou stand steadfast in Me, thou mayest change, but wilt not better thyself. For, when the occasion ariseth and is laid hold of, thou shalt find that which thou didst flee from, and more also.

A Prayer for a Pure Heart and Heavenly Wisdom

CONFIRM me, O God, by the grace of Thy Holy Spirit. Strengthen by Thy virtue the power of the inner man, and empty my heart of all unprofitable care and anxiety, so that I may not be drawn away from Thee by desires of any kind whatsoever, whether mean or precious, but mayest look upon all things as passing, and I with them. For there is nothing abiding under the sun, where all is vanity and vexation of spirit. O, how wise is he that thus considereth them!

O Lord, grant me heavenly wisdom, that I may learn to seek and to find Thee above all things; to relish and to love Thee above all things; and to see all things as they are, as Thou, in Thy wisdom hast ordained them. Grant me prudently to avoid him that flattereth me, and to suffer patiently him that opposeth me.

For it is great wisdom not to be moved by every wind of words, nor to give ear to the evil-flattering siren; for thus shall we go on securely in the way that we have begun.

CHAPTER 28

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Against the Tongues of Slanderers

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

MY son, take it not to heart if some think ill of thee, and speak that which thou wouldst hear unwillingly. Rather oughtest thou to judge thyself worse than thy detractors, and to consider none weaker than thyself. If thou dost walk inwardly, thou wilt pay small heed to flying words. It is great prudence to keep silence in an evil hour. Turn inwardly to Me, and thou wilt remain untroubled by the judgments of man.

Let not thy peace be at the mercy of the tongues of men; for whether they speak well or ill of thee thou art not changed thereby. Where are true peace and true glory? Are they not in Me? And he that neither desireth to please nor feareth to displease men, will enjoy much peace. From inordinate loves and groundless fears ariseth all disquietude of heart and distraction of mind.

CHAPTER 29

How We ought to call upon God, and to bless Him, when Tribulation is upon us

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

BLESSÈD be Thy Name, O Lord, for ever; for that Thou hast willed that this trial and tribulation come upon me. I cannot escape it, but must needs fly to Thee, that Thou mayest help me, and turn it to my good. Lord, I am now in tribulation, and my heart is distraught; for I am much troubled with this present suffering. And now, belovèd Father, what shall I say? I am overwhelmed with anguish. O, save me from this hour. Yet for this cause came I unto this hour, that Thou mightest be glorified, when, greatly humbled, I shall have been delivered by Thee. Let it please Thee, Lord, to deliver me; for, poor wretch that I am, what can I do, and whither shall I go without Thee? Grant me patience, O Lord, even at this present time; help me, O God, and, howsoever grievously I am afflicted, I will not be afraid.

In the midst of this present tribulation what shall I say? Lord, Thy Will be done. I have well deserved to be troubled and distressed. Wherefore it is right that I should suffer. Grant that I may keep my soul in patience until the tempest pass and all is well. Thy Almighty hand hath power to take from me this great trial, or to temper the violence thereof, that I be not utterly overcome; as oftentimes heretofore Thou hast done for me, O God, my mercy! And the harder it is to me, so much the more easy to Thee is this change of the right hand of the Most High.

CHAPTER 30

Of Seeking the Divine Aid, and Confidence of Recovering Grace

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

MY son, I am the Lord who giveth strength in the day of tribulation. Come thou to Me when all is not well with thee. That which most of all hindereth thy receiving heavenly consolation is thy slow recourse to prayer. For before thou turnest to Me in earnest supplication, thou seekest elsewhere many comforts, hoping to find help and solace in outward things, but these doth little avail thee. Only then thou rememberest that I am He Who delivereth them that trust in Me; and that without Me, nought availeth; neither powerful aid, nor profitable counsel, nor lasting remedy.

Now having renewed thy spirit after the storm, thou regainest strength in the light of My mercies; *for I am at hand*, sayeth the Lord, *to restore all things fully*, *yea, with great plentitude.*

Is anything hard to me? Or am I like unto man, who promiseth but doth not fulfil? Where is Thy faith? Stand steadfastly and persevere; be patient and courageous; and My consolation will come to thee in due time. Wait, wait I say, for Me: I will come and heal thee. It is temptation that tormenteth thee, and vain fear that afrighteth thee. What doth anxiety about the future bring thee but sorrow upon sorrow? Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. It is idle and unprofitable to be either anxious or to rejoice about future events, for that which thou conceivest may never come to pass.

But it is common to man to be deluded with such imaginings; and the sign of an irresolute soul, as yet too easily lured away at the suggestion of the enemy. For, so long as he succeedeth in deluding and deceiving thee, Satan careth not whether it be by truth or falsehood, nor whether he overcome thee by the love of things present or the dread of things to come. Let not, therefore, thy heart be troubled nor let it be afraid. Believe thou in Me, and put thy trust in My mercy. When thou thinkest I am far from thee, I am oftentimes nearest unto thee. When thou accountest all as well-nigh lost, then oftentimes accrueth thy greatest gain of merit. All is not lost when things fall out contrary to thy wishes. Thou oughtest not to judge according to the feeling of the moment, nor yield to heaviness of spirit; nor dwell overmuch upon any trouble, whencesoever it cometh, and behave not as though all hope of deliverance were gone.

Think not thyself to be wholly forsaken, if, for a time, I send thee some tribulation, or withdraw thy longed-for consolation, for this is the way to the Kingdom of Heaven. And without doubt it is more expedient for thee and for the rest of My servants, that ye be proven by adversity, than that all things should be according to your desire. I know the secret thoughts of thy heart, and that it is most expedient for thy salvation that thou be left betimes without taste of spiritual sweetness, lest thou become complacent of thy condition, and puffed up by thy success, imagining thyself to be that which thou art not. That which I have given I may take away; and restore it again when it pleaseth Me.

When I give it, it is Mine; when I withdraw it, I take not anything that is thine; for every good and perfect gift is Mine. If I send thee affliction, or any adversity, murmur not, nor let thy heart be sad; for lo! I can quickly uplift thee and turn all thy dejection into joy. Nevertheless, I am righteous and to be praised when I thus deal with thee.

If thou hast wisdom, and perceivest what the truth is, thou wilt never sorrow dejectedly over any adversity that may befall thee. Rather wilt thou rejoice and give thanks; yea, thou wilt account this an especial joy, that I afflict thee with sorrows and spare thee not. *As the Father loved Me, so I love you*, said I unto My belovèd disciples; whom certainly I sent not to temporal joys, but to great conflicts; not to honours, but to derision; not to idleness, but to labours; not to rest, but to bring forth much fruit with patience. Remember thou these words, O My son.

CHAPTER 31

Of the Contempt of all Creatures, in order to Find the Creator

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

LORD, I stand in need of still more grace, if I am to reach that state where neither man nor any created thing can retard me. For as long as anything holdeth me back, I cannot fly freely to Thee. One who longed to take refuge in Thee said: *Who shall give me wings like a dove, and I will fly away and be at rest?* What is more at rest than the eye that is single? And who is more free than he that desireth nothing upon earth? A man ought therefore to soar above all created things, and, perfectly forsaking himself, stand in an ecstasy of mind, and perceive that Thou, the Creator of all things, art incomparable in Thy creation. For unless a man be delivered from bondage to things created, he hath not freedom to attend unto the things of God. For this reason there are found but few contemplative men, in that few are capable of sequestering and withdrawing themselves completely from perishable things.

For this requireth grace in such abundance that the soul may be elevated far above herself. Unless a man be uplifted in spirit and disentangled from all creatures, and wholly united to God; whatsoever he knoweth, and whatsoever he hath, is of little value. For a long time he will be small, and lie grovelling below, who accounteth anything great but the One Immeasurable, Infinite, and Eternal Good.

Whatsoever is not of God is nothing, and to be accounted as nothing. There is great difference between the wisdom of one that is illumined and full of devotion, and the knowledge of a learnèd and studious cleric. Far more noble is that wisdom that floweth from the divine source than learning which is painfully acquired by the mind of man.

Many desire a contemplative life, but few are willing to exercise themselves in the things that are necessary to the attainment thereof. A great hindrance to many is that they put too much faith in the things of the senses, and care little about perfect self-mortification. I know not what it is, or by what spirit we are led, or what we pretend to, when we that are called spiritual men take so much pains and are so full of anxiety about transitory and mean things, and seldom or ever give our whole mind to the contemplation of inward things.

Alas, after a short meditation we break off, and do not subject our lives and actions to diligent and strict examination. We do not question ourselves as to the objects of our affections, nor do we deplore the impurity that tainteth all our actions. For *all flesh had corrupted his way*, and therefore followed the great deluge. Wherefore, since our inward affection is much corrupted, our ensuing actions, lacking inward strength, are corrupted also. From a pure heart proceedeth the fruit of a good life.

Men ask how much a man hath done; but what degree of virtuous principle governs his life, no man enquireth. We ask whether he be courageous, rich, handsome, clever, a good writer, a good singer, a good workman: but how poor he is in spirit, how humble and patient, how spiritual and devout, is rarely spoken of. Nature beholdeth the outward man, but Grace turneth itself to the inward. Nature is oftentimes deceived; but Grace trusteth in God and is never deceived.

CHAPTER 32

Of Self-denial and Renouncing every Evil Appetite

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

MY son, unless thou wholly deny thyself, thou canst not possess perfect liberty. For they whose hearts are governed by self-love and self-interest are fettered by their own desires. They are covetous, inquisitive, irresolute, and are for ever seeking an easy way, instead of the hard way of Jesus Christ; ofttimes devising and shaping that which hath no lasting virtue. For all that is not of God shall perish. Obey this short and consummate word: *Forsake all and thou shalt find all; renounce desire and thou shalt find rest.* Consider well this saying, and when thou hast accomplished it, thou shalt understand all things.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

O Lord, this is not the work of one day, nor children's play; yet this short sentence containeth the whole counsel of spiritual perfection for the religious.

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

My son, be not cast down, nor turned from thy purpose, when thou hearest of the way of perfection; rather shouldst thou be strengthened in thy resolution to aspire to the heights which the Saints have trod. I would it were so with thee, and that thou wert nearing the stage when self-love will be extinguished, and thou wilt stand ready at My bidding, and his whom I have appointed father over thee; then wouldst thou greatly please Me, and all thy days would pass in joy and peace. Thou hast yet to renounce many things, and unless thou doest this for My sake, thou canst not obtain that for which thou prayest. Therefore I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest become rich in that Heavenly Wisdom which treadeth under foot all that is mean and low. Put behind thee all earthly wisdom; all desire to please the world and thyself.

I have said that things mean and of little value must be bought with those which are precious to thee and highly esteemed of man. True Heavenly Wisdom seemeth to many very mean and contemptible, and is almost forgotten of men; for it thinketh not highly of itself, nor seeketh to be magnified upon earth. Many praise it with their utterance, but their lives are at great variance with their lips. Yet this Wisdom is the pearl of great price, and is hidden from many.

CHAPTER 33

Of Inconstancy of Heart, and of Directing our final Intention to God

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

MY Son, trust not the emotion of the moment; for whatsoever it may be, it will soon give place to another. As long as thou livest in this world, thou art subject to change, even against thy will. Thus thou art now glad, now sad; now pleased, now troubled; now fervent, now undevout; now diligent, now listless; now grave, now light-hearted. But he that is wise and well-instructed in the things of the spirit standeth above these changing emotions. He is not swayed by personal feelings, nor doth he study from which quarter the wind of instability bloweth; but only that his whole mind and intention are directed to the right and wished-for end. Thus will he be able to remain steadfast and unshaken in the midst of many changes; for that his singleness of purpose is directed unceasingly to Me.

The purer the eye of thine intention, the greater will be thy constancy when the storms of life break over thee. But in many the eye of pure intention waxes dim; for presently their regard is drawn aside to some delectable thing, and seldom is one found who is wholly free from all blemish of self-seeking. So the Jews of old came to Bethany to Martha and Mary, not for Jesus's sake only, but that they might see Lazarus. Therefore, the eye of thine intention must be purified, that it may be single and upright, and directed to Me alone, beyond all the various objects that may come between.

CHAPTER 34

That God is Sweet above all Things, and in all Things, to Him that Loveth Him

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

BEHOLD! My God, and my all! What can I wish for more? What greater joy can I long for? O word of sweetness and delight! but only to him who loveth the Word more than the world, and all things that are in the world. My God, and my all! To him that hath wisdom and understanding, these words suffice; and often to repeat them giveth delight to him that loveth. Verily, when Thou art present, all things yield delight; but when Thou art absent, everything becometh burdensome and sorrowful. Thou alone canst give tranquillity of heart, great peace, and festive joy.

Thou makest us to think well of all things, and to praise Thee in all things; without Thee, nothing can bring true and lasting happiness. Therefore if a thing is to be pleasing and harmonious unto us, Thy Grace must be present, and it must be seasoned with the condiment of Thy Wisdom.

He that hath true relish from Thee, will find everything agreeable; but to him that hath no relish from Thee, what can have power to please? The worldly-wise, and they that relish the things of the flesh, are lacking in Thy Wisdom; for in the world is found much vanity, and in the flesh, death. But they that follow Thee, by despising earthly things, and mortifying the flesh, are truly wise; for they pass from vanity to truth, and from the flesh to the spirit. These relish God; and whatsoever of good is found in creatures, they wholly ascribe unto the praise of their Maker. Great, yea, very great, is the difference between the enjoyment of the Creator and enjoyment of His creation, of Eternity and of time, of Light uncreated and of light created.

A Prayer

O ETERNAL Light, surpassing all created light, flash forth Thy lightning from above, that it may penetrate the innermost recesses of my heart. Uplift, gladden, purify and reinvigorate my spirit with Thy divine power, that I may cleave unto Thee with transcendent joy. O, when will that blessèd and longed for hour come, when Thou wilt fill me with Thy Presence, and be unto me All in all? For until I attain unto this grace, I shall not have fullness of joy. Alas! the old man doth yet live in me; he is not wholly crucified, is not perfectly dead. He still ruleth my lower nature, lusteth mightily against the Spirit, and stirreth up inward strife; nor doth he suffer the kingdom of the soul to remain in peace.

But Thou that rulest over the power of the sea, and stillest the lifting up of its waves, do Thou, O Lord, arise and help me! Scatter the nations that desire war. Destroy them by Thy mighty power. Manifest Thy greatness, and let Thy right hand be glorified. For there is no other hope or refuge for me, save in Thee, O Lord my God.

CHAPTER 35

That in this Life there is no Security from Temptation

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

MY son, thou art never secure in this life. As long as thou livest thou wilt have need of spiritual armour. Thou dwellest in the midst of enemies, and art assaulted on the right hand and on the left. If, therefore, thou defend not thyself on every side with the shield of patience, thou wilt not long remain unwounded. Moreover, if thou set not thy heart fixedly on Me, firmly resolved to suffer all things for My sake, thou wilt neither be able to endure the heat of the combat, nor attain the victory of the Saints. It behoveth thee, therefore, manfully to go through all, and to use a strong hand against thine adversaries; for to him that overcometh is given Manna from Heaven, but to the indolent much misery.

If thou seek rest in this life, how canst thou attain to rest everlasting? Dispose thyself not for much rest, but for great patience. Seek true peace not upon earth, but in Heaven; neither in men nor in any other creature, but in God alone. For the love of God thou oughtest cheerfully to suffer all things; labour, sorrow, temptation, vexation, anxiety, necessity, infirmity, wrong, obloquy, censure, humiliation, confusion, correction and contempt. For all of these are aids to virtue; these prove the soldier of Christ; these glorify the heavenly Crown. For a short labour I will give thee an everlasting reward, and for transitory suffering, infinite glory.

Thinkest thou to enjoy spiritual consolations at thine own will and pleasure? It was not so with My Saints. These endured many trials and afflictions, many diverse temptations, and great desolation of soul; yet through all they bore themselves patiently, putting their trust in God rather than in themselves; knowing that the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to come. Wouldst thou have granted to thee now that which others obtained only after many tears and great labours? Wait for the Lord; conduct thyself manfully and be of good courage; despair not but remain steadfast, offering both body and soul for the glory of God. And I shall reward thee abundantly; I shall be with thee in every tribulation.

CHAPTER 36

Against the Vain Judgments of Men

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

MY son, caſt thy heart firmly on the Lord. If thou art devout and innocent, thy conscience beareth witness for Thee, and thou needest have no fear of the judgments of men. It is a good and blessèd thing so to suffer; neither will this be grievous to him who is humble of heart, nor him that putteth his trust in God rather than in himself. Many men speak of many things, and therefore little credence is given to what they say. Moreover, to satisfy all men is not possible. For though Saint Paul endeavoured to please all in the Lord, and became all things to all men, he accounted it a small thing to be judged of men.

He laboured abundantly for the edification and salvation of others, doing all that lay in his power; yet even he could not always avoid being judged and sometimes despised by others. Therefore he committed all to God, Who knoweth all things; and defended himself with patience and humility against the calumnies of unjust, vain, and deceitful men, and his wicked and lying accusers. However, sometimes he answered, lest his silence give scandal to the weak.

Who art thou, that thou shouldst fear a mortal man? Today he is; tomorrow he is no more. Fear God, and thou wilt not shrink from the terrors of men. What harm can the words or actions of any man do unto thee? He injureth himself rather than thee; for, whosoever he may be, he cannot escape the judgment of God. Have God before thine eyes, and contend not with querulous words. And if presently thou seem to be worsted, and to suffer shame undeservedly, murmur not, nor impoverish thy crown by impatience; but rather lift up thine eyes unto Me in Heaven, for I have power to deliver thee from every shame and wrong, and to render to each according to his works.

CHAPTER 37

Of Pure and Entire Resignation of Ourselves, for the Obtaining Freedom of Heart

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:
My son, renounce thyself, and thou shalt find Me. Stay where thou art, neither preferring nor seeking anything for thyself, and thou shalt always gain. For the moment thou resignest thyself to Me, provided thou dost not recant, even greater grace will be given unto thee.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:
Lord, how often shall I resign myself? and wherein shall I forsake myself?

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:
Always, yea, every hour; in small things and in great. Thou must divest thyself of self in all things. For how canst thou

be Mine, and I thine, unless, both inwardly and outwardly, thou be stripped of all self-will? The sooner thou doest this, the better it will be with thee; and the more fully and sincerely thou doest it, the more wilt thou please Me, and the greater will be thy gain.

Some there are that resign themselves, but with certain reservations, and put not their full trust in God; therefore they consider how best to provide for themselves. Some also at first offer all; but afterwards, having succumbed to temptation, they revert to their former state and make no progress in the path of virtue. These will obtain neither true freedom of heart, nor the grace of My gracious friendship, unless, with complete resignation, they offer themselves as a daily oblation unto Me. Without this surrender, there neither is, nor can be, any lasting and fruitful union with Me.

I have often said unto thee, and I say again: Forsake thyself, resign thyself, and thou wilt enjoy great inward peace. Give all for all; ask for nothing; require nothing back; abide purely and unhesitatingly in Me, and thou wilt possess Me. Then shalt thou be free in heart, and no darkness shall burden thy spirit. Let this be thy resolve and endeavour, this thy prayer, this thy desire; that thou mayest be divested of all manner of selfishness, and, naked and destitute, and with complete renunciation, follow Jesus only, that thou mayest die to self, and live eternally in Me. Then shalt thou be rid of all vain fantasies of the imagination, all evil perturbations, and all superfluous cares; then also immoderate fear will leave thee, and inordinate love will die.

CHAPTER 38

Of the Good Government of Ourselves in Outward Things, and of having Recourse to God in Dangers

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

MY son, thou oughtest earnestly to strive in every place, and in every outward action or occupation, to be inwardly free, and completely master of thyself. Let all things be ruled by thee, and not thou by them; that thou be lord and master of thine own actions, and not their slave, or hireling. Rather shouldst thou be as a freeman and a true Hebrew, passing over to the destiny and freedom of the sons of God. For these stand upon things present, and contemplate things eternal; these look with the left eye on transitory things, and with the right eye on the things of Heaven. These are not drawn by, nor do they cleave unto, temporal things, but rather draw such things to God's better service, even as He Himself hath ordained, and as appointed by the Sovereign Architect, Whose whole creation is purposeful and orderly.

And if thou, in every circumstance, stand steadfast, judging not by outward appearances, nor regarding with the carnal eye the things which thou seest and hearest; but instantly and on every occasion dost enter like Moses into the Tabernacle to ask counsel of the Lord; thou shalt hear betimes the Divine answer, and return instructed about many things, both present and to come. For Moses hesitated not at all times to have recourse to the Tabernacle when beset by doubts and dangers, resorting to prayer for God's help and guidance against the iniquities of men. So oughtest thou, in like manner, to take refuge within the secret chamber of thine heart, beseeching earnestly the divine favour. For we read that for this very cause Joshua and the children of Israel were deceived by the Gibeonites, for that they asked not beforehand the counsel of the Lord, but trusting too readily to fair words, were deluded by false piety.

CHAPTER 39

That a Man Should not be Too Anxious about His Affairs

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

My son, always commit thy cause to Me, for I shall dispose of it well in due time. Await My ordering of it, and thou salt find it to be for thy good.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

Lord, right gladly do I entrust all things unto Thee, for my own will doth little avail me. Would that I dwelt less on what the future may bring, but unreservedly gave myself up to Thy good pleasure.

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

My son, oftentimes a man striveth and is sorely tormented, to obtain the thing that he desireth, but having obtained it, he beginneth to be of another mind; for the desires of man do not long remain on one object, but drive him from one thing to another. It is therefore no small merit if a man forsake self even in the smallest things.

True spiritual advancement consisteth in disciplining oneself; and he that exerciseth self-denial enjoyeth great freedom and security. But the Old Enemy, the Adversary of all that is good, ceaseth not from tempting, but day and night lieth in wait to entrap the unwary in snares of deceit. *Watch ye, and pray,* saith the Lord, *that ye enter not into temptation.*

CHAPTER 40

That Man hath no Good of Himself, nor any Thing Whereof He can Glory

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

LORD, *what is man, that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that Thou visitest him?* What hath man deserved, that Thou shouldst grant him Thy grace? O Lord, what cause have I to complain if Thou forsake me, or if Thou refuse me that which I desire, what can I justly say against it?

Surely this I may truly think and say: "Lord, I am nothing, I can do nothing, of myself I have nothing that is good, but constantly fail in all things and ever tend to nothing." Unless Thou help and instruct me inwardly, I become altogether lax and spiritless.

But Thou, O Lord, endurest from everlasting to everlasting; eternally good, righteous and holy; enacting all things well, justly, and in holiness, and disposing them in wisdom. But I, who am more prone to fall back than to progress, do not long continue in one estate; for *seven times are passed over me.* Nevertheless, when it pleaseth Thee to stretch forth Thy helping hand, all is soon amended; for Thou alone, without man's aid, canst so help and strengthen me, that my countenance will be changed no more to sadness, and my heart will be converted to Thee alone, and at rest.

Wherefore, could I but perfectly renounce all human consolation, whether for the attainment of devotion, or because of that inner necessity which compelleth me to seek for Thee, for none but Thee can comfort me, then might I be worthy to hope for Thy grace, and rejoice in Thy gift of new consolation.

Thanks be to Thee, from Whom all doth proceed, for all that hath gone well with me. For in Thy sight, O Lord, I am vanity and nothingness, a man inconstant and weak. In what, then, can I glory? For what do I merit to be held in high esteem? Can nothing boast of its nothingness? Surely this were a vain thing. In Truth, vainglory is an evil pestilence, and the greatest of vanities; for it draweth a man away from true glory, and despoileth him of heavenly grace. He who is self-complacent pleaseth himself, but displeaseth Thee; and in hankering after the praises of men, he depriveth himself of the real virtues.

True glory and holy exultation is to rejoice in Thee, and not in oneself; to joy in Thy Name, and not in one's own virtue, nor to take delight in any created thing, except it be for Thy sake. Therefore, praised be Thy name, and not mine; let Thy work be magnified, and not mine; blessèd be Thy Holy Name, but to me let there be attributed no portion of men's praises. Thou alone art my glory; Thou art the exultation of my heart. In Thee will I rejoice and glory every hour of every day; but as for myself, I will glory in nothing but in mine infirmities.

Let the Jews seek the glory that cometh of another; I seek that glory which God alone can give. For, compared to Thine everlasting glory, all human glory, all temporal honours, all earthly exultation, are but vanity and folly. O God, my truth and my mercy! O Blessèd Trinity, to Thee alone be all praise, honour, power and glory, throughout the ages of ages. Amen.

CHAPTER 41

Of the Contempt of all Temporal Honours

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

MY Son, do not feel hurt if thou seest others honoured and given advancement, while thou thyself art despised and brought low. Lift up thy heart to Me in Heaven, and the contempt of men on earth will not grieve thee.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

Lord, we are in blindness, and are quickly deceived by vanity. If I examine myself aright, I perceive that never hath wrong been done to me by any creature; therefore I cannot justly complain against Thee.

But because I have often and grievously sinned against Thee, all creatures do rightfully take arms against me. Unto me, therefore, shame and contempt are justly due, but unto Thee, O Lord, praise, honour and glory. And unless I prepare myself willingly and gladly to be despised and forsaken of every creature, and to be esteemed as nothing, I can obtain neither the stability of inward peace nor spiritual enlightenment, nor can I be fully united with Thee.

CHAPTER 42

That our Peace is not to be Placed in Men

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

My son, if thou placest thy peace in any person because of thy regard for him, or because thou art living in daily communion with each other, thou wilt become unsettled and entangled. But if thou hast recourse to the ever-living and abiding Truth, the desertion or death of a friend will not greatly grieve thee. Thy love for thy friend ought to be rooted in Me; and whomsoever seemeth good or dear unto thee in this life, is to be beloved only for My sake.

Without Me, friendship hath neither strength nor endurance; nor is love true and pure unless I bind and unite it. Thou oughtest to be so dead to the affections of beloved friends, that, as affecting thyself, thou wouldst choose to renounce all human fellowship. The farther a man retireth from all earthly consolation, the nearer he approacheth unto God. The higher he ascendeth to God, the deeper he penetrateth his own being, and the more lowly he appeareth to himself.

He that ascribeth any good unto himself, hindereth the coming of God's grace; for the Grace of the Holy Spirit ever seeketh the humble heart. If thou couldst completely annihilate thyself, and empty thyself of all love of creatures, then would My grace flow into thee in great abundance. When thou lookest to the created, the vision of the Creator is withdrawn from thee. Learn then, for the sake of thy Creator, to overcome thyself in all things; only then wilt thou be able to attain to divine wisdom. If anything be inordinately loved or regarded, howsoever small it may be, it corrupteth and holdeth back the soul from the Highest Good.

CHAPTER 43

Against Vain and Worldly Learning

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

MY son, be not moved by the sayings of men, however fair and subtle they may be. For the Kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. Give heed to My words, for they enkindle the heart and enlighten the mind; they induce compunction, and bring great consolation. Never read anything in order to appear learnèd or wise; study rather how best to eradicate thy sins and vices; for this will avail thee more than the solving of many difficult problems.

When thou hast read and mastered many things, thou oughtest ever to revert to the one fundamental Principle, namely that *I am He that teacheth man knowledge;* I give to My children a clearer understanding than can be imparted by man. He to whom I speak will soon gain wisdom, and greatly profit in Spirit. Woe be to them that enquire of men about many curious things, but little concern themselves with serving Me! The time will come when Christ the Master of masters, and Lord of Angels, shall appear to hear the lessons of all; that is to examine the consciences of all. Then will He *search Jerusalem with candles,* and the hidden things of darkness shall be brought to light, and all argument of tongues shall be silenced.

I am He that, in an instant of time, doth uplift the humble mind to comprehend more of the eternal Truth than if he had studied ten years in the schools. I teach in the silence, without confusion of opinions, without ambition for honours, and without the noise of disputation. I am He Who teacheth men to despise earthly things, to abhor things present, to seek heavenly things, to relish things eternal; to flee honours, to endure scandal, to put their entire hope and trust in Me, to desire nothing other than Me, and, above all things, ardently to love Me.

A certain man, who loved Me with his whole heart, became instructed in divine things and spake wondrously about them. He profited more in Spirit by forsaking all things, than by the study of subtle distinctions of doctrine. Nevertheless, to some I speak of common things; to others of unusual things; to some I sweetly show Myself in signs and symbols; and to others I reveal the greater mysteries of the Light. A book hath but one voice, but it informeth not all alike; for I within thee am the Teacher and the Truth, the Searcher of hearts, the Discerner of thoughts, the Promoter of actions; distributing to each as I deem fitting.

CHAPTER 44

Of not Being Drawn away to Outward Things

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

MY Son, in many things thou must needs be ignorant, and esteem thyself as one dead to the world, and everything earthly crucified. Furthermore many things there are which thou must pass by with a deaf ear; meditating only upon those which will bring thee unto peace. It is more profitable to turn away thine eyes from matters of controversy, and to leave every man to his own opinion, than to become the slave of contentious discourses. If thou standest well with God and have regard to His judgment, thou wilt bear discomfiture more patiently.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

O Lord, to what are we come? We bewail a temporal loss; for a trivial gain we toil and run; but the spiritual harm to our souls is soon forgotten, and seldom recalled. Our thoughts are given to things which little availeth, but that which is sovereignly necessary is negligently passed over;

for the whole man floweth out to things external, and unless he speedily recover himself, he willingly remaineth immersed in them.

CHAPTER 45

That We ought not to Believe all, and that Man is Prone to Err in Speech

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

GRANT me help, O Lord, out of tribulation, for vain is the salvation of man! How often have I found unfaithfulness where I had thought to find loyalty! And how often have I found faithfulness where I had least expected to find it! It is vain, therefore, to put one's trust in man; the salvation of the righteous is in Thee, O God! Blessèd be Thou, O Lord my God, in all things that befall us. We are weak and unstable; quick to change and easily deceived.

Who is he that is able to act in all things so cautiously and circumspectly, that he is never in doubt, never deceived, and never hath cause for uncertainty? But he that trusteth in Thee, O Lord, and seeketh Thee with a pure heart, doth not err so readily. And if he fall into tribulation, however great his entanglement therein, Thou wilt quickly deliver and comfort him; for, even unto the end, Thou forsaketh him not that trusteth in Thee. A faithful friend, who continueth loyal in all his friend's misfortunes, is seldom to be found. Thou alone, O Lord, art faithful and constant; there is none other like unto Thee.

O how wise was that holy soul (St. Agatha) who said: *My mind is firmly settled, and is grounded in Christ.* If it were so with me, the fear of men would not so easily disquiet me, nor the arrows of men's words torment me. Who hath power to forsee all things? Who can face with equanimity the evils that are to come? If things foreseen do oftentimes hurt us, how much more grievous will be the wounds of the unforeseen. But, wretch that I am, why have I not perceived more clearly what I must do for myself? Why, too, have I trusted so readily in others? We are but men, and, despite our vanity, but frail men, even though many have thought us worthy to be called Angels.

Whom shall I believe, O Lord? In Whom shall I trust but Thee? Thou art the Truth that deceiveth not, and cannot be deceived. And, too, every man is a liar; weak, unstable, and equivocal, especially in words; therefore we must use caution in forming judgments on that which seemeth to sound well and righteous when first we hear it.

How prudently hast Thou forewarned us to beware of men; and that a man's foes are they of his own household; and not to believe whoever may say; *Lo here, or lo there.* My hurt hath been my teacher; and I pray God that it make me more cautious, and not more foolish. "Be discreet", sayeth one, "be discreet; keep to thyself what I say to thee;" and whilst I keep silence and think the matter to be secret, he faileth to keep secret that which he hath disclosed unto me, and presently betrayeth both himself and me, and goeth his way. From such mischief-making, heedless men, defend me, O Lord, that I fall not into their hands, nor ever commit such offences. Let my speech be governed by truth and constancy; remove far from me a deceitful tongue. That which I am unwilling to suffer, I ought by every means to avoid.

O, how good a thing it is, how fruitful of peace, to be silent about others, nor to believe, nor to repeat indiscriminately all one has heard about them; to lay oneself open to few; but ever to seek for Thee, the Beholder of all hearts. We ought not to be carried on every wind of words; but to desire that all things, both within us and without, be accomplished according to the pleasure of Thy will.

If thou wouldst obtain the grace of heaven, thou must have no thought to outward appearances, no desire for such things as create envy or admiration abroad; but cultivate diligently the things of the spirit, for these will amend thy life, and increase thy zeal for virtue.

How many there be that have suffered ill, for that their virtue was recognised and too hastily commended! How salutary and efficacious is Grace when preserved in silence in this frail life, a life that is full of temptation and conflict!

CHAPTER 46

Of Putting our Trust in God when Arrows of Words Assail Us

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

MY son, stand steadfastly, and put thy trust in Me. For what are words, but words? They fly through the air, but hurt not even a stone. If thou art guilty, let thy willing intention be to amend thyself; and if thy conscience be clear, resolve that thou wouldst gladly endure this for the sake of God. It is little enough that thou shouldst sometimes suffer harsh words, who art as yet unable to endure hard blows. And why takest thou such small things to heart? Because thou art yet worldly, and regardest men more than thou oughtest; and because of thy fear of being despised, thou art unwilling to be reproved for thy faults, and seekest shelter in excuses.

Look deeper into thyself, and thou shalt find that the world is still alive in thee, and that thou still takest a vain delight in pleasing men. But that thou art averse to rebuke and confounded by thy faults, is evidence that thou art neither truly humble, nor dead to the world, nor is the world crucified to thee. Hearken only to My word, and thou shalt not care for ten thousand words of men. Behold, if all that could be maliciously invented were spoken against thee, what hurt could this do thee if thou wouldst suffer it all to pass, even as straws in the wind? Could it so much as pluck one hair from thy head?

But he that hath deserted his innermost heart, and hath not God before his eyes, is quickly discountenanced by a word of reproof. Whereas he that trusteth in Me, and thinketh not to rest secure in his own judgment, shall be delivered from the fear of man. For I am the Judge and the Discerner of all secrets; I perceive how every action is brought about; I know both him that inflicteth injury and him that suffereth thereby. This was My pronouncement; by My consent hath this befallen; that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. I will judge the guilty and the innocent; but I have thought fit beforehand to try them both with a secret judgment.

The testimony of men oftentimes deceiveth. My judgment is true; wherefore it shall stand and shall not be subverted. It is oftentimes hid, and few there be to whom all is revealed; yet it never erreth, nor can it err, although in the eyes of the wordly-wise it appeareth unjust. Therefore, in every judgment, thou oughtest to have recourse to Me, putting no reliance in the opinions of men. Whatsoever befalleth him from God, will not trouble the righteous man. Yea, even if an unjust charge be brought against him, it will cause him small concern; nor will he vainly rejoice if, through others, he be justly vindicated. For he considereth that I am He that searcheth the hearts and reins; I judge not according to the outward face, nor according to a man's appearance. For oftentimes that which in My sight is found blameworthy, seemeth to man's judgment laudable and to be commended.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

O Lord God, the just judge, strong and patient, Who knoweth the frailty and depravity of man, be Thou my strength and my whole confidence, for mine own conscience sufficeth me not. Thou knowest that which I know not; therefore when under censure and reproof, I ought to humble myself and to bear all meekly. Lord, as often as I have not done so, mercifully pardon me, and grant me grace for greater endurance. For Thy copious mercy is better to me for the obtaining of pardon, than is any fancied righteousness of mine own, to ward off my secret misgivings of conscience. And if I have no misdeed on my conscience, even so I cannot hereby justify myself; for without Thy mercy, in Thy sight shall no man living be justified.

CHAPTER 47

That All Grievous Things are to be Endured for the sake of Eternal Life

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

MY son, let not the labours which thou hast undertaken for My sake break thee, nor tribulations overwhelm thee; but in every circumstance let My promise strengthen and console thee. I am sufficient to reward thee above all measure and degree. Thou shalt not labour here for long, nor shalt thou always be oppressed with sorrows. Wait but a little while, and thou wilt see a speedy end to thy suffering. The hour cometh when all labour and trouble shall cease. Small and brief is that which passeth away with time.

Do what thou hast to do; labour faithfully in My vineyard; I will be thy reward. Write, read, sing, do penance, keep silence, pray. Bear thy crosses manfully; life everlasting is worth all such trials, yea, and still greater conflicts! Peace shall come on a day that is known to the Lord; it shall be neither day nor night as now known, but light perpetual, infinite brightness, abiding peace, and safe rest. Then thou shalt not say: *Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* Nor shalt thou cry: *Woe is me, that my sojourning is prolonged!* For there shall be no more death, but unfailing salvation; no more anxiety, but blessèd joy, and sweet and noble fellowship.

O, if thou couldst but see the everlasting crowns of the Saints in heaven, with what great glory they now rejoice, who were deemed contemptible by the world, and unworthy to live; truly thou wouldst humble thyself even to the earth, and wouldst rather seek to be in subjection to all, than to be over even one of thy fellowmen. Nor wouldst thou long for the pleasant days of this life, but rather wouldst rejoice to suffer tribulation for God, and esteem it thy greatest gain to be accounted as nothing among men.

O, hadst thou but a relish for these things, and didst suffer them to find a dwelling place in thine innermost heart, how couldst thou dare so much as once to complain! Are not all grievous labours to be endured for the sake of life eternal? It is no small thing to gain or to lose the Kingdom of God. Therefore, lift up thy face unto Heaven. Behold I, and all My saints with Me, who in this world endured great conflicts, do now rejoice, are now comforted, are now secure, are now at rest. They shall abide with Me everlastingly in the kingdom of My Father.

CHAPTER 48

Of the Day of Eternity, and the Straits of this Life

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

O MOST blessèd dwelling of the City which is on high! O most glorious day of eternity, which no night darkeneth, but which is perpetually enlightened by the Highest Truth! O day of unending joy, and security unchanging! O that this day would dawn, and that all things temporal would come to an end! For the Saints, it shineth now with uninterrupted splendour; but to those who are pilgrims upon the earth it appeareth afar off, as through a glass.

The Citizens of Heaven know how joyful that day is; but we children of Eve bewail our exile with bitterness and sorrow. Few and evil are the days of this life, and full of sorrow and distress. Here a man is defiled with many sins, ensnared by many passions, in bondage to many fears, racked with many cares, distraught by many strange things, entangled with many vanities, encompassed about with many errors, worn out with many labours, burdened with many temptations, enervated by pleasures, tormented by want.

O, when will there be an end of these many evils? When shall I be delivered from the wretched bondage of my vices? When, O Lord, shall I be mindful of Thee alone? When shall I fully rejoice in Thee? When shall I enjoy true liberty without impediment, and suffer neither distress of soul nor of body? When shall I have lasting peace, peace secure and undisturbed, peace within and peace without, peace firm on every side? O good Jesus, when shall I stand in Thy presence? When shall I contemplate the glory of Thy Kingdom? When wilt Thou be to me all in all? When shall I be with Thee in Thy Kingdom, which Thou hast prepared for Thy well-beloved from all eternity? I am left poor and an exile in the land of mine enemies, where there are daily conflicts and grievous misfortunes.

Comfort me in mine exile, assuage my sorrow, for my whole being aspireth unto Thee; for all that the world offereth as solace unto me is like unto a heavy burden. I long to enjoy Thee inwardly, yet I cannot attain unto Thee. I will to cleave wholly to heavenly things, but temporal things and my unmortified passions weigh me down. My mind aspireth to spiritual things, but the flesh overcometh my will and entangleth me in things below. Thus, unhappy man that I am, I fight against myself, and become burdensome to myself; for my spirit seeketh what is above, but my flesh seeketh that which is below.

O, what inward suffering I endure! For even whilst my mind striveth to dwell on heavenly things, yea, even whilst I pray, I am assailed by a multitude of worldly thoughts! O my God, be not Thou far from me, nor turn away in wrath from Thy servant. Flash forth Thy lightning, and scatter them; shoot out Thine arrows, and let all the artifices of the Enemy be confounded. Gather my senses unto Thee; make me to forget all worldly things; enable me speedily to cast away with scorn all vicious imaginings.

Succour me, O Truth Eternal, that no vanity may move me. Come, Thou heavenly sweetness, and make all impurity to fly from before Thy face. Pardon me also, and mercifully overlook my transgressions, as often as in prayer I think on aught beside Thee. For I truly confess that I am wont to yield to many distractions of mind. Thus many times it happeneth that I am not where I am bodily standing or sitting, but rather whither my thoughts have carried me. Where my thoughts are, there am I: and oftentimes where my thoughts are, there also are the things I love. That which to me is naturally delightful, or is by custom most pleasing, cometh to the mind all too readily.

Wherefore, Thou that art Truth itself hast plainly said: *For where thy treasure is, there thy heart is also.* If I love Heaven, I gladly think on heavenly things. If I love the world, I rejoice when the world rejoices, and grieve for the world's adversity. If I love the flesh, I oftentimes conceive in the imagination things that are pleasing to the flesh. If I love the spirit, I delight to think of things spiritual. For whatsoever things I love, thereof do I willingly speak and hear, and conjure up the images thereof. But blessèd is that man who for Thy sake, O Lord, is willing to sacrifice everything earthly, and, doing battle with his lower nature, through fervour of Spirit crucifieth the lusts of the flesh; so that, with a serene conscience, he may offer pure prayer unto Thee; and, all worldly things being overcome both outwardly and inwardly, becometh worthy to be admitted to the choir of Angels.

CHAPTER 49

Of the Desire for Eternal Life, and how Great Rewards are Promised to those that Strive Resolutely

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

MY son, when thou perceivest the origin of Thy desire for eternal bliss, which is poured into thee from above, and doth long to depart out of the tabernacle of the body, that thou mayest be able to contemplate My brightness which hath no shadow of change; open wide the doors of thy heart, and let thy whole desire be to receive this holy inspiration. Give fervent thanks to the Sovereign Goodness Which treateth thee so benignly, mercifully visiting thee, stirring up thine ardour, sustaining thee mightily, lest the weight of thy lower nature drag thee down to earthly things. For this gift cometh to thee not by thine own thought or endeavour, but only by the condescension of heavenly grace and divine beholding; to the end that thou mayest progress in all virtue, attain deeper humility, and prepare thyself for future conflicts; earnestly striving to cleave unto Me with whole-hearted affection, and to serve Me willingly with all fervour.

My son, howsoever often the fire burneth, the flame ascendeth not without smoke. So, likewise, the desires of some men are raised to heavenly things, but they are not free from the temptations of the flesh. Therefore their earnest requests to God are made not altogether purely for His honour. Such oftentimes are thine own desires, which thou hast professed to be so genuine and earnest. For how can desires which are alloyed with self-interest be pure and perfect?

Ask not for that which is pleasant and profitable to thee, but for that which is acceptable to Me, and tendeth to My honour; for if thou judgest aright, thou oughtest ever to put My ordinance before thine own desire, and prefer and follow it before all things. Thy longings are known unto Me; I have heard thy distressful groanings. Even now thou doth long to enjoy the glorious liberty of the sons of God, and fain wouldst savour the delight of the everlasting habitation, the heavenly country where joy reigneth. But that hour is not yet come. There still remaineth for thee another time, a time of battle, a time of trial and testing. Thou longest to be filled with the Supreme Good; but as yet thou canst not attain it. *I Am*, sayeth the Lord; *wait thou for Me until the Kingdom of God shall come.*

Thou hast yet to be proved on earth, and to be subjected to many things. Consolation shall sometimes be given thee, but not the abundant fullness thereof. Take courage therefore, and be strong; valiant in doing, as well as in suffering, things contrary to thy nature. Thou must put on the new man, and be reborn of the Spirit. It behoveth thee oftentimes to undertake that which thou wouldst rather forgo; and to leave undone that which thou fain wouldst do. That which pleaseth others shall prosper well; but that which pleaseth thee shall not prosper. The words of others shall be hearkened unto; what thou sayest shall be accounted as naught. Others shall ask and shall receive; but thine own requests shall not be granted.

Others shall be greatly esteemed of men; but of thy works they shall keep silent. To others this or that shall be entrusted; but thou shalt be accounted unfit. Wherefore thy nature will sometimes be troubled and sad, and thou shalt achieve much if thou bear all such trials in silence. In these, and many such-like ways, the faithful servant of God is wont to be tested how far he can deny and break himself. There is scarcely anything wherein thou hast such need to die to thyself, as in seeing and suffering those things that are contrary to thy will; more especially when thou art commanded to undertake what seemeth unto thee inconsistent and useless. And because, being under authority, thou dare not resist the higher power, therefore it seemeth hard to thee to be at the beck and call of another, and to give up thine own opinion.

But consider, My son, the fruit of these labours, their speedy termination, and the exceeding great reward. Then shalt thou feel no grievance thereat, but the strong consolation of thy patience. For by virtue of that little will which thou now willingly forsakest, thou shalt forever have thine own will in Heaven. Verily thou shalt find there all that thou canst will or desire; there thou shalt have within thy reach all good, without fear of losing or forgoing any part thereof. There thy will, being ever one with Mine, shall covet no outward or private thing. There none shall resist thee, none complain of thee, none oppose thee; none act against thee, but every desirable good will be present together to replenish thy whole aspiration and fulfil it in the highest degree. There I will give thee glory for shame and reproof; the garment of praise for heaviness, and for thy lowly place on earth, a royal throne in My everlasting kingdom. There shall appear the fruits of obedience; there the labour of penance shall rejoice, and humble subjection shall be crowned gloriously.

Now, therefore, bow thyself humbly under the hands of all, taking no heed of who said this, or who commanded that; but let this be thy chief concern: that whether thy superior, or thy inferior, or thine equal, ask anything of thee, or suggest anything to thee, thou take all in good part, and, with sincere good will, endeavour to perform it. Let one seek this, another that; let this man glory in this, another in that, and let them be praised a thousand thousand times; but let thou, for thy part, regardless of self, take no pleasure either in this or in that, but only in that which pleaseth and honoureth Me. Let this alone be thy constant care: that, whether it be in life or death, God may be ever glorified in thee.

CHAPTER 50

How a Desolate Man ought to Offer Himself into the Hands of God

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

O LORD GOD, Holy Father, blessèd be Thou, both now and for ever; for as Thou wilt so is it done, and what Thou doest is eternally good. Let Thy servant rejoice in Thee, and not in himself, nor in any other thing; for Thou alone, O Lord, art true gladness, Thou art my hope and my crown, Thou my joy and my honour. What hath Thy servant save only what he received of Thee? and this notwithstanding his own lack of merit. All things are Thine, both what Thou hast given, and what Thou hast made. I am poor, and in my labours, from my youth, and my soul is oftentimes sorrowful even unto tears, and disquieted by the menace of its passions.

I long for the joy of peace; I earnestly crave the peace of Thy children who are fed by Thee in the light of Thy consolation. If Thou givest peace, if Thou infuse me with holy joy, the soul of Thy servant will be filled with melody, and be devout in Thy praise. But if Thou withdraw Thyself, as Thou art oftentimes wont to do, he may not be able to run in the way of Thy commandments; but rather will he kneel, and smite his breast; for it is not now with him as it was in times past, when Thy light shone upon his head, and he found under the shadow of Thy wings, protection from the temptations which assailed him.

O Father, righteous and ever to be praised, the hour cometh in which Thy servant will be tried. O Father, worthy of all love, it is meet and right that in that hour Thy servant should suffer something for Thy sake. O Father, perpetually to be honoured, the hour cometh of which from all eternity Thou didst have fore-knowledge; when, for a short time, Thy servant should outwardly be oppressed, though inwardly he ever liveth unto Thee. The hour cometh when for a little while he will be looked upon with ignomy, humiliated, and become a failure in the eyes of men. When he will be worn out with suffering and weariness, that he may rise again with Thee in the morningtide of the new dawn, and be glorified in Heaven. O Holy Father, this Thou hast willed and appointed, and thus is fulfilled that which Thou Thyself hast ordained.

For, to Thy friend, this is Thy favour: that, for love of Thee, he must suffer and be afflicted in this world, how-often-soever, and by-whom-soever, and in what-way-soever Thou decreeth that such trials will befall him. For without Thy design and providence, and without cause, nothing is done in the earth. It is for my good, Lord, that Thou hast humbled me, that I may learn from Thy righteous judgments, and cast from my heart all pride and presumption. It is profitable for me that shame hath covered my face, if only I turn to Thee for consolation rather than to men. I have learned hereby to stand in awe of Thy inscrutable judgments; who afflicteth both the righteous and the wicked, though with justice and equity.

Lord, I thank Thee that Thou hast not spared my evil deeds, but hast bruised me with bitter stripes, inflicted me with sorrows, and sent me anguish and distress both within and without. Of all things under Heaven, there is none that can comfort me save Thou only, O Lord My God. Thou art the Heavenly Physician of Souls, who woundest and healest, Who bringest down to hell and bringest back again. Thy discipline is upon me; Thy rod will instruct me.

Behold, O well-belovèd Father, I am in Thy hands; I bow myself down under the rod of Thy correction. Smite Thou my back and my neck until my stubborn perversity is obedient to Thy will. Make me a true and humble disciple, as Thou, of Thy mercy, art wont to do, that I may follow the path that Thou hast set for me. To Thy holy correction, I commit myself and all that are mine: for it is better to be chastised here than hereafter. Thou knowest all, and each thing separately; nothing in man's conscience is hidden from Thee. Thou hast foreknowledge of all that will come to pass; Thou hast no need to be taught or admonished by man of what is done upon the earth. Thou knowest what is expedient for my soul's progress, and how great tribulation can scour away the rust of sin. Do with me, Lord, according to Thy will and good pleasure, and reject not my sinful life, which none knoweth so fully and clearly as Thou.

Grant me, O Lord, to know that which is worthy to be known; to love that which is worthy to be loved; to praise that which alone best pleaseth Thee; to esteem highly that which is precious to Thee; to abhor that which is foul in Thy sight. Suffer me not to judge according to the sight of the outward eyes, nor to make assessment according to the hearing of the ears of ignorant men; but to discern with true judgment both things visible and things spiritual, and, above all, to seek continuously to understand Thy will and intention.

The mind of man is often deceived in its judgment; and the lovers of this world are oftentimes blinded by their passion for material things. Is a man ever the better for being esteemed great of men? The deceitful deceive the deceitful, the vain deceive the vain, the blind the blind; the weak flatter the weak, and, in truth, the more each extolleth the other, the more he putteth him to shame. *For what every one is in Thy sight, so much is he, and no more,* saith humble St. Francis.

CHAPTER 51

That We ought to Employ Ourselves in Humble Works, when We fail in the Higher Exercises of the Soul

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

MY son, thou canst not continue always in a state of fervent desire for virtue, nor abide constantly in the higher spheres of divine contemplation; but, by reason of thy sinful nature, thou must needs sometimes descend to lesser things, and bear the burden of this corruptible life, though it be against thy will, and with weariness of spirit. As long as thou inhabitest a mortal body, thou wilt feel heaviness and sadness of heart. It behoveth thee therefore whilst in the flesh, oftentimes to lament the burden of the flesh, inasmuch as thou canst not employ thyself continuously in spiritual exercises and divine contemplation.

At such times it is expedient for thee to give thyself to humble, exterior occupations, and to refresh thy spirit by devoting thyself to good works. Await My coming and Heavenly visitation with steadfast confidence, suffering patiently thine exile and aridness of soul till I visit thee again, and deliver thee from all anxieties. Then will I make thee to forget thy labours, and furnish thee with inward peace. I will spread out before thee the pleasant fields of the Scriptures, that, with a larger heart, thou mayest begin to run the way of My commandments. Then shalt thou say: *The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the future glory that shall be revealed in us.*

CHAPTER 52

That a Man ought not to Esteem Himself Worthy of Consolation, but rather Deserving of Chastisement

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

LORD, I am not worthy of Thy consolation or of any spiritual visitation; therefore Thou dealest justly with me when Thou leavest me helpless and desolate. For though I were to shed a sea of tears, I should still be unworthy of divine comfort. I merit nothing other than to be scourged and punished; for I have oftentimes grievously offended Thee, and walked in the paths of the unrighteous. Wherefore, according to the judgment of truth and reason, I am undeserving of the least consolation. But Thou, O gracious and merciful Lord, Who willest that Thy works should not perish, to show the riches of Thy goodness upon the vessels of mercy, doth vouchsafe even beyond his merits, to comfort Thy servant above the solace of man. For Thy consolation cannot be likened unto the empty words of man.

What have I done, O Lord, that Thou shouldst bestow upon me the benefaction of heavenly consolation? I recall not any good that I have done, but that, in very truth, I have been ever prone to vice, and slow to amendment. This I cannot deny; and were I to plead otherwise, Thou wouldst stand against me, and there would be none to defend me. What have I deserved for my sins but hell and everlasting fire? I truly acknowledge that I am deserving of all scorn and contempt, and that I am unfit to be numbered among Thy devout servants. And however unwillingly I may do so, nevertheless, for Truth's sake, I will accuse myself, and condemn my sins, that I be the more readily accounted worthy to obtain Thy mercy.

What can I say, a guilty sinner, and full of all confusion? I have no word to speak save this only. I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned; have mercy upon me and pardon me. Suffer me a little, that I may bewail my grief, before I go into the land of darkness, a land covered with the shadow of death. What requirest Thou of a guilty and miserable sinner, save that he be penitent and humble himself for his sins? True contrition and humility of heart bring hope of forgiveness; the troubled conscience is reconciled; lost grace is restored; man is defended from the wrath to come; and God and the penitent soul meet together in a holy kiss.

Humble contrition for sin is an acceptable sacrifice, more fragant unto Thee, O Lord, than the sweetest incense. This also is the precious ointment which Thou desired to be poured upon Thy most sacred feet; for Thou never despisest the contrite and humble heart. Here is the place of refuge from the angry face of the Enemy; here the place of amendment; here, at Thy feet, the soul is cleansed of every defilement of sin.

CHAPTER 53

That the Grace of God is not Communicated to the Worldly-minded

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

MY son, My grace is precious, and suffereth not itself to be mingled with outward things, nor with earthly consolations. Wherefore, if thou wouldst receive it, thou must remove all hindrances to its divine inflowing. Seek out for thyself a secret place; love to dwell alone with thyself, desiring conversation with none; but rather pour forth to God a devout prayer that thou mayest be penitent in mind and pure in conscience. Esteem the whole world as nothing, and put the service of God before all else, for thou canst not hope to wait upon Me, and delight thyself also in transitory things. It behoveth thee therefore to alienate thyself from acquaintances, and even thy dear friends, and thy mind from every temporal solace. Wherefore the blessèd Apostle Peter beseecheth all the faithful in Christ to keep themselves as strangers and pilgrims in this world.

O what great confidence shall a man have at the hour of death, if no bondage to any earthly thing detaineth him in this world! The infirm of soul cannot know what it means to have the heart perfectly alienated from all worldly things; nor doth the carnal man perceive the liberty of the spiritual man. Wherefore he that would be truly spiritual, must renounce both those that are far distant, and those that are nigh unto him, and beware of none so much as of himself. If thou perfectly overcome thyself, thou wilt the more easily subjugate all else. The perfect victory is to triumph over self. For he that keepeth himself in subjection so that his passions are obedient to his will, and his will in all things obedient to Me, is truly the conqueror of himself, and master of the world.

If thou aspirest to mount up to this height of perfection, thou must begin courageously and lay the axe to the root, that thou mayest tear up and destroy all hidden and inordinate inclination to self, and all private and material gain. For from Man's vicious propensity for too inordinate self-love springeth almost all of those other vices which must be radically overcome; and if this evil be once vanquished and subdued, great peace and tranquillity will presently ensue. But because few labour perfectly to die to themselves, or to overcome the limitations of self; they therefore remain entangled and encumbered and are unable to be raised in spirit above self. He that would walk with Me in perfect freedom, must mortify all his corrupt and disordered affections, and must not covet, cleave to, or selfishly love, any creature.

CHAPTER 54

Of the Different Motions of Nature and Grace

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

MY son, observe diligently the motions of Nature and of Grace; for they move in a very contrary and subtle manner, that can scarcely be distinguished save by one that is spiritually and inwardly enlightened. All men aspire to good, and pretend to some manner of good in their words and deeds; wherefore under the guise of good, many are deceived. Nature is cunning and seduceth many, ensnareth and deceiveth many, and hath always self for her end and object: but Grace walketh in simplicity, abstaineth from all that is evil, pretendeth neither falseness nor deceits, and doeth all things purely for the sake of God, in Whom also she finally resteth.

Nature is unwilling to be mortified, bridled, or overcome; to be under subjection, or to accept obedience. But Grace studieth self-mortification, withstandeth sensuality, seeketh to be in subjection, desireth to be overcome, and hath no wish to enjoy her own liberty. She loveth to be under discipline, coveteth not to rule over any, but ever to live and remain under God's rule; and, for the sake of God, is ready humbly to bow down unto every ordinance of man. Nature laboureth for her own advantage, and always considereth what gain she may reap at the expense of another. But Grace considereth not what is profitable and advantageous unto herself, but rather what may be for the good of the many. Nature willingly receiveth honour and reverence; but Grace faithfully assigneth all honour and glory unto God.

Nature feareth shame and contumely; but Grace rejoiceth to suffer reproach for the Name of Jesus. Nature delighteth in ease and bodily rest; but Grace cannot be at leisure or idle, but cheerfully embraceth toil. Nature coveteth rare and beautiful things, and abhorreth all things common and coarse; but Grace delighteth in simple and humble things, despiseth not rough things, nor refuseth to be clothed in old garments. Nature hath respect for temporal things, rejoiceth in earthly gains, is distressed by worldly losses, and is hurt by every little word of injury or wrong. But Grace looketh towards things eternal, cleaveth not to things temporal, and is neither disturbed by losses, nor angered by hard words; for she layeth up her treasure and joy in Heaven, where nothing perisheth.

Nature is covetous, doth more readily take than give, and taketh delight in personal and private possessions; but Grace is full of pity, is open-hearted, shunneth private interest, is content with few things, and deemeth it more blessèd to give than to receive. Nature inclineth a man towards creatures, to the desires of his own body, to vanities, and to running hither and thither. But Grace draweth unto God and to every virtue, renounceth created things, fleeth the world, hateth the desires of the flesh, restraineth her wanderings, and is reluctant to be seen in public. Nature gladly taketh delight in such outward things as gratify the senses. But Grace seeketh consolation in God alone, and delighteth in the Highest Good above all things visible.

Whatever Nature undertaketh is for her own gain and profit. She doeth nothing freely, but for every kindness bestowed she hopeth to obtain an equal or better return, or, at the least, praise or favour; and earnestly desireth that her deeds, gifts and words should be acclaimed and much valued. But Grace seeketh nothing which is temporal nor desireth any reward other than God alone. She asketh only such temporal necessaries as may serve her for the obtaining of things eternal.

Nature rejoiceth to have many friends and kindred; she taketh pride in high rank and noble birth, smileth upon the mighty and powerful, fawneth upon the rich, and applaudeth those who are like unto herself. But Grace loveth even her enemies, is not puffed up because of a multitude of friends, nor thinketh aught of high birth unless it be allied to exalted virtue. She favoureth the poor rather than the rich, hath more compassion for the innocent than for the mighty, rejoiceth with the honest and not with the deceitful man; and ever exhorteth the good, to strive for the better gifts, and, by the exercise of virtue, to become like unto the Son of God. Nature soon complaineth of want or of trouble; but Grace steadfastly endureth poverty.

Nature referreth all things to self, and striveth and disputeth for self; but Grace referreth all things to God, Who is their fount and origin. She ascribeth nothing of good to self, nor is she arrogant or presumptious. She contendeth not, nor doth she prefer her own opinion to that of others;

but, in every matter of mind and feeling submitteth herself unto the Eternal Wisdom and the Divine judgment. Nature is eager to know secrets, and yearneth after new things; she delighteth to appear abroad, and to accept as the proof of things, the evidence of her own senses; she desireth to be known, and to do only such things as win praise and admiration. But Grace hath no desire for new and curious things, for all such spring from the old corruption of man; for there is nothing new or lasting upon the earth. Grace teacheth man to restrain the senses, to avoid vain complacency and ostentation, humbly to hide those things which arouse wonder and commendation; and from every thing and all knowledge, to seek some profitable fruit, and the praise and honour of God. Grace hath no desire that she or her works be acclaimed openly, but rather that God alone should be blessed in His gifts, Who out of His pure love, bestoweth all things.

This Grace is a supernatural light, and an especial gift of God, the seal of His chosen children, and the pledge of eternal salvation. It raiseth man from a love of earthly things to love the things of Heaven, and he that is carnal it maketh spiritual. Therefore the more nature is controlled and overcome, so much the greater is the infusion of Grace; and, by new and daily visitations, the inward man is remoulded in the image of God.

CHAPTER 55

Of the Corruption of Nature, and of the Efficacy of Divine Grace

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

O LORD my God, who hast created me in Thine own image and likeness, grant me this Grace, which Thou hast shown to be so great, and so necessary to man's salvation; that I may overcome my evil lower nature, which draweth me to sin and perdition. For I feel in my flesh the power of sin running counter to the law of my mind, leading me in captive obedience to indulge the cravings of sensuality in many things. Nor can I resist the passions thereof, unless the fervour of Thy most holy Grace be poured into my heart to assist me.

I have need of Thy Grace, O Lord, yea, in great measure, that Nature may be overcome, which is ever prone to evil from her youth. For fallen through Adam, the first man, and corrupted by sin, the penalty of this stain hath descended upon all mankind, so that Nature itself, which by Thee was created good and upright, is now taken to mean the sin and infirmity of man's corrupt nature; inasmuch as the inclination thereof, left unto itself, gravitateth ever to evil and low things. For the small power for good that remaineth is as a tiny spark buried in ashes. This is that self-same Natural Reason encompassed on every side with great darkness, still able to discern as between good and evil, truth and falsehood; but as yet unable to fulfil all that it approveth; for it enjoyeth no longer the full light of Truth, nor the former healthfulness of its own affections.

Hence it is, O Lord My God, that I delight in Thy law after the inward man, knowing Thy commandment to be good, just and holy, both for the reproof of all evil, and the avoidance of sin; but with the flesh I serve the law of sin, and obey the senses rather than the reason. Therefore it is, that to will what is good is present with me, but how to perform it I find not. Wherefore oftentimes I purpose to do many good things, but because I lack Grace to strengthen my weakness, even a light resistance causeth me to falter and fail. Thus, though I know the way of perfection, and see clearly what I ought to do, yet I am so borne down by the weight of mine own corruption, that I rise not to higher things.

O Lord, Thy Grace is supremely necessary unto me to begin the good life, and to continue therein until I attain perfection; for without it I can do nothing. But in Thee I can do all things when Thy grace doth strengthen me. O true and heavenly Grace, without which our own merits are as nothing; nor any gifts of Nature to be esteemed! O Lord, without Thy Grace, neither arts, nor riches, nor beauty, nor strength, nor genius, nor eloquence, have any value. For gifts of Nature are common to both good and evil men, but the peculiar gift of Thy chosen children is Grace or Divine Love; and they that are thus sealed shall be esteemed worthy of everlasting life. So eminent and excellent is this Grace, that neither the gift of prophecy, nor the working of miracles, nor any speculation, however exalted, is of value without it. Yea, neither faith, nor hope, nor any other virtues, are acceptable unto Thee, O Lord, without Grace and Love.

O Thou most blessèd Grace, that makest the poor in spirit rich in virtue, and he that is rich in goods humble of heart! Come, descend into me, replenish me early with Thy consolation, lest my soul faint from weariness and aridness of mind. Lord, I beseech Thee that I may find grace in Thy sight; for Thy Grace is sufficient for me, even though the things that nature desireth be denied me. Though I be tempted and tried with many tribulations, yet will I fear no evil so long as Thy Grace is with me. This alone is my strength; this alone giveth counsel and help; is more mighty than all mine enemies, and wiser than all the wise.

Thy Grace is the mistress of truth, the teacher of discipline, the light of the heart, the solace of affliction, the dispeller of sorrow, the expeller of fear, the nurse of devotion, the fountain of contrite tears. What am I without Grace but a dry tree, a barren stock, fit only to be cast away. Let Thy Grace therefore, O Lord, always both prevent and follow me, and make me to be continually given to good works, through Jesus Christ Thy Son. Amen.

Chapter 56

That We ought to Deny Ourselves and Imitate Christ by the Cross

The Voice of Christ:

My son, the more thou forsakest thyself, so much the more wilt thou be able to enter into Me. As a man must covet nothing if he is to attain inward peace, so the renunciation of self inwardly uniteth him with God. I would have thee learn the perfect resignation of thyself to My will, without opposition or complaint. Follow thou me: *I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.* Without the Way, there is no going; without the Truth, there is no knowing; without the Life, there is no living. I am the Way that thou must follow; the Truth that thou must believe; the Life that thou must hope for. I am the Way inviolable, the Truth infallible, the Life that hath no ending. I am the straight Way, the supreme Truth; Life true, blessèd, and uncreated. If thou remain in My Way, thou shalt know the Truth, and the Truth shall make thee free, and thou shalt lay hold on Life everlasting.

If thou wilt enter into Life, keep the commandments. If thou wilt know Truth, believe Me. If Thou wilt be perfect, sell all. If thou wilt be My disciple, deny thyself. If thou wilt possess the Life that is blessèd, despise this present life. If thou wilt be exalted in heaven, humble thyself on earth. If thou wilt reign with Me, bear My cross with Me. For none but the servants of the cross do find the way of blessedness and the true light.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

O Lord Jesus, for as much as Thy way was narrow, and despised of the world, grant me grace to follow Thee in the world's contempt. For the servant is not greater than his Lord, nor the disciple above his Master. Let Thy servant be exercised in Thy life, for therein lies my salvation and true holiness. Nothing else that I read or hear, giveth such plentitude of refreshment and delight.

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

My son, inasmuch as thou hast read and knowest all these things, happy shalt thou be if thou do them. *He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and I will love him and will manifest Myself unto him*, and he shall sit with me in the kingdom of My Father.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

O Lord Jesus, as Thou hast said and hast promised, so let it come to pass, and grant that I be found worthy to deserve it. From Thine own hand I have taken the cross. I will bear it, yea even unto death, for Thou hast laid it upon me. Verily the life of a good Religious is the cross, but it is also the guide to paradise.

We have begun; we may not turn back; nor is it right to forsake it. Take courage, brethren! Let us go forward together! Jesus will be with us. For the sake of Jesus, we took up the cross; for the sake of Jesus, let us persevere in the cross. He will be our helper, for He is our Leader and Forerunner. Behold, our King goeth before us and He will fight for us! Let us follow manfully, undaunted by any terror. Let us be ready to die valiantly in battle. Grant, O Lord, that we stain not our honour by deserting the cause of the Cross.

CHAPTER 57

That a Man should not be too much Dejected, even when He Falleth into Some Defects

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

MY son, patience and humility in adversity are more pleasing to Me than great gratification and devotion when things go well with thee. Why grievest thou over every little thing said against thee? Had it been even more disturbing, thou oughtest to have remained unmoved. Let it pass. It is no new thing; it is not the first, nor will it be the last if thou live long.

Thou art courageous enough so long as no adversity befalleth thee. Thou art able to give good counsel, and thou knowest how to strengthen others with words of wisdom; but when, of a sudden, tribulation cometh to thine own door, both thy counsel and thy courage fail thee. Take heed to this great frailty, whereof thou hast experience in so many small vexations. Nevertheless, all such testings, however trifling, are for thy good. Therefore, when thou art called upon to undergo such trials, let not thy heart be discouraged, but resolve, as best thou canst, that thou wilt not suffer them to cast thee down, nor long encumber thee.

Endure tribulation at least patiently if not joyfully, and if thou feelest reluctant to bear it, and suffer indignation thereat, yet restrain thyself, and let no inordinate word pass thy lips, whereby the ears of My little ones may be offended. The storm thus raised will quickly be allayed, and inward sorrow sweetened by returning grace. *I yet live*, saith the Lord, *and am ready to help thee, and to grant thee still greater consolation, if thou wilt but put thy trust in Me, and call devoutly upon Me.*

Be quiet in soul, and gird thyself for still greater endurance. All is not lost, although thou dost oftentimes feel thyself troubled or grievously tempted. Thou art a man, and not God; thou art flesh, and not an Angel. How canst thou hope to abide always in the same state of virtue, when even an angel in Heaven, and the first man in paradise, didst fall. I am He that raiseth up to safety them that mourn; I raise to My Divinity them that are conscious of their own infirmity.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

O Lord, blessèd be Thy Word, sweet unto my mouth above honey and the honeycomb. What should I do amid so many and great tribulations and anxieties, didst Thou not strengthen me with Thy holy words? What matter is it how great and numerous the trials I suffer, so long as I attain at last the haven of Salvation? Grant me a good end; grant me a gracious passing out of this world. Be mindful of me, O my God, and direct me in the right path to Thy kingdom. Amen.

CHAPTER 58

That High Matters and God's Secret Judgment are not to be Narrowly Enquired Into

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

MY son, guard thyself against disputation about divine things and the secret judgments of God: why this man is forsaken, and that man is so highly gifted; why one is so grievously afflicted, and another so eminently exalted. These things are beyond the reach of man's faculties; nor will reason and controversy prove able to search out and explain God's judgments. Therefore, when the Enemy suggesteth these things unto thee, or the curious enquire of thee about them, answer as did David the Prophet: *Just art Thou, O Lord, and right is Thy judgment: The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.* My judgments are to be feared, not to be argued, for they are incomprehensible to man's understanding.

In like manner, enquire not nor dispute of the merits of the Saints; which is holier than another, or which is the greater in the Kingdom of Heaven. Such unprofitable controversies oftentimes engender strife and contention, nourish pride and vainglory, and give rise to envies and dissensions. Thus one proudly acclaims this Saint, and another that. Indeed this urge to explore the unfathomable is not only fruitless, but is displeasing to the Saints themselves; for I am not the God of dissension, but of peace;

which peace consisteth rather in true humility, than in self-exaltation.

Some ardent souls are more devoted to one Saint than to another; but this affection partaketh more of human than of divine love. I am He Who made all the Saints; I gave them Grace and raised them to Glory. I know the merits of each; I prepared the way for them with the blessings of My sweetness. I foreknew My belovèd ones before the beginning of time. I chose them out of the world; they did not first choose Me. I called them by grace, I drew them by mercy. I led them safely through divers temptations; I poured into them great consolations; I gave them perseverance; I crowned their patience.

I know them all from the first to the last; I enfold them all with love inestimable. I am to be praised in all My saints. I am to be blessed above all things, and to be honoured in each one of them, whom I have thus gloriously magnified, and fore-ordained, without any previous merits of their own. He, therefore, that despiseth one of the least of My Saints, dishonoureth the greatest also; for I made both the great and the small. And he that disparageth any of My Saints, disparageth Me also, and all others in the Kingdom of Heaven. All are one through the bond of love; their thought is one, their will is one, and love uniteth them in one communion.

Moreover, what is higher still, they love Me more than they do themselves, or any merits of their own. For, transcending self and self-love, they are wholly rapt in loving Me, in Whom also they rest joyfully. Nothing can turn them aside; nothing depress them; for, being filled with the eternal Truth, they burn with the fire of Love unquenchable. Therefore let worldly and carnal men, whose love is that of the selfish gratification of the senses, forbear to dispute over the standing of God's Saints. For such men add and take away according to their own inclination, not as it pleaseth the Eternal Truth.

It is thus with many because of ignorance, especially those who, being but meagrely enlightened, are seldom capable of perfect spiritual love. They are as yet much drawn to this person and that by natural affection and human friendship, and so habituate themselves to earthly experience, that they cloud their conception of heavenly things. For there is distance immeasurable between the perception of men as yet imperfect, and that of the divine illumination of the Saints of God.

Beware therefore, My son, that thou treat not with vain curiosity things that are beyond thy knowledge; but rather let thy mind and labours be directed to this end: that thou mayest become worthy to be accounted even the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. Even if any man knew which Saint were accounted holier or greater than another in God's Kingdom, what would this avail him, unless by virtue of this knowledge he were to humble himself the more before Me, and rise up to give greater praise to My Name? How much more acceptable to God is he that hath regard to the magnitude of his own sins: and how little he hath of virtue, how far removed from the perfection of the Saints, is he that disputeth over who are the greater or lesser among them. Better it is to petition the Saints with devout prayers and tears, and to implore their glorious intercession with a humble heart, than vainly to endeavour to search out their secrets.

The Saints, in their bliss, are well content. Would that men also would rest content, and would restrain themselves from indulging in such vain discourses. The Saints glory not in their own merits; they ascribe no goodness to themselves, but attribute all to Me, Who of My infinite love gave them all things. They are filled with so great a love of the Godhead, and with such overflowing joy, that there is nothing wanting to their glory, nor anything lacking in their bliss. And this is true of all the saints: the higher they are in glory, the lowlier they are in themselves, nearer unto Me, and the more beloved by Me. Therefore it is written that *They did cast their crowns before God, and fall down on their faces before the Lamb and adored Him that liveth for ever and ever.*

Many an one who asketh: "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" knoweth not whether he shall be worthy to be accounted even among the least. It is a great thing to be even the least in Heaven, where all are great; and all are, or will, be called the Sons of God. The least shall become a thousand, and the sinner of an hundred years shall die. For when the disciples enquired who should be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven, they received this answer: *Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.*

Woe to them who disdain to humble themselves willingly like little children; for the low gate of the Kingdom of

Heaven will not grant them entrance. Woe also to the rich, who have here their consolation; for whilst the poor enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, they shall stand lamenting without. Rejoice, ye humble, and be glad ye poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God, so long as ye walk in the Truth.

CHAPTER 59

That all Our Hope and Trust is to be Fixed in God Alone

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

LORD, in what can I put my trust in this life? or what, of all things under Heaven, is my greatest comfort? Is it not Thou, O Lord, my God, Whose mercies cannot be numbered? Hath it ever been well with me without Thee? When have I suffered ill when Thou wert with me? Lord, I had rather be poor for Thy sake, than rich without Thee. I would choose to be a sojourner on earth with Thee, rather than to possess Heaven without Thee. Where Thou art, there is Heaven: and where Thou art not, there is death and hell.

Thou art my one desire; therefore I must needs sigh for Thee, and cry for Thee, and fervently pray unto Thee. There is none whom I can fully trust, none that can truly help me in my necessities, save Thee alone, O God. Thou art my hope; Thou my trust; Thou my comforter; in all things most faithful.

All men seek their own; but Thou, O Lord, seeketh only to further my salvation, and my progress in the things of the Spirit, Thou turnest all to my good. Yea, although Thou exposest me to divers temptations and adversities, yet Thou ordainest all to my advantage; for Thou art wont to prove Thy chosen servants in a thousand ways. Wherefore in this, my time of testing, Thou oughtest no less to be loved and praised than if Thou hadst filled my soul with heavenly consolation.

In Thee therefore, O Lord God, I place my whole hope and refuge. On Thee I lay all my tribulation and anguish; for on whatsoever I lay hold that is not of Thee, I find weak and inconstant. For many friends avail not, nor can strong helpers aid, nor wise counsellors give profitable counsel, nor the books of the learnèd give comfort, nor any precious substance give deliverance, nor any place, however secret and beautiful, give refuge, unless Thou Thyself dost assist, help, strengthen, solace, teach and guard me.

For, without Thee, all things that seemeth to make for peace and happiness are worthless. Verily, if Thou be absent they yield neither peace nor felicity. Thou alone art the Fountain of all good, the Height of life, the Depth of all wisdom; and to trust in Thee above all things is the strongest comfort of Thy servants. To Thee, O God, I lift up mine eyes; in Thee, the Father of mercies, I put my trust. Bless and santcify my soul with Thy heavenly benediction, that it may become Thy holy habitation and the seat of Thine eternal glory. Let nothing be found in this temple of Thy divinity to offend the eyes of Thy Majesty. According to the greatness of Thy goodness and the multitude of Thy mercies, look Thou upon me, and hearken unto the prayer of Thy poor servant, who is exiled far from Thee in the land of the shadow of death. Defend and keep my soul amidst so many perils of this corruptible life, and, Thy grace going with me, guide me in the way of peace to the land of everlasting light. Amen.

BOOK FOUR

On the Blessed Sacrament

A devout exhortation to Holy Communion

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you," saith the Lord.

"The bread which I will give is My Flesh, for the life of the world."

"Take, eat; this is My Body which is given for you: This do in remembrance of Me."

"He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him."

"The Words which I have spoken unto you are Spirit and Life."

CHAPTER I

With what Great Reverence Christ ought to be Received

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

O LORD JESU CHRIST, Eternal Truth, these prefatory words are Thy words, though all were not spoken at one time nor written in one place. Yet because they are Thy words, I ought faithfully and dutifully to receive and understand them. They are Thy words; Thou hast proferred them, and now they are mine also, for Thou hast spoken them for my salvation. Gladly do I receive them from Thy lips, that they may be the more deeply implanted in my heart. Thy most gracious words, so mellifluous and full of love, do greatly inspire me; but Lord, mine own sins do much dishearten me, and an impure conscience retardeth me from the receiving of so great a Mystery. The sweetness of Thy words doth animate and encourage me, but the multitude of my sins weigheth heavily upon me and grieveth me.

Thou commandest me to come confidently unto Thee, if I would have part with Thee, so that I may willingly receive the food of immortality and obtain Thy joy and life eternal. Thou sayest, Lord, *Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will refresh you.* O sweet and amiable are these words in the ear of a sinner, that Thou, my Lord and my God, dost, of Thy benign grace, bid me that am poor and needy to the participation of the

Holy Communion of Thy most precious body! Lord of all goodness, who am I that I should presume to desire Thee? Behold, Heaven and earth cannot comprehend Thee, yet Thou sayest, *Come ye all unto Me.*

What meaneth this so gracious condescension, this so loving invitation? How shall I dare to come unto Thee, I who can find in myself no goodness whereupon I may presume? How shall I bring Thee into my house, I that have so often offended before Thy glorious and most benign countenance? Angels and Archangels stand in awe before Thee, holy and righteous men do fear Thee, yet Thou sayest, *Come ye all unto Me!* O Lord, had not thou Thyself uttered it, who would believe this truth? And unless Thou Thyself didst command it, who would dare to draw near unto Thee? Behold, Noah, that just man, laboured an hundred years in the making of the Ark, that he might be saved with a few of his people. How then shall I, in the space of one hour, prepare myself to receive with due reverence the Creator of the world?

Moses, Thy great servant and especial friend, made an Ark of timber incorruptible, and covered it over with pure gold, wherein to contain the Tables of the Law; how then shall I, a corrupt creature, dare to receive Thee, the Maker of the Law, and the Giver of grace and life? Solomon, the wisest of the kings of Israel, spent seven years in building a magnificent temple to the glory and worship of Thy Name. He also celebrated the Feast of Dedication thereof for eight days together; he offered a thousand peace-offerings, and solemnly set the Ark of the Covenant in the place prepared for it, to the sound of clarions and trumpets and great jubilation. How then shall I, the unworthiest and poorest of men, bring Thee into my house, I that can scarce spend one hour in true devotion? Would that I might devoutly spend even one half-hour in worthy and due manner!

O blessèd Jesu, how earnestly did they who trod this way before me, study and endeavour to do anything that might please Thee! Alas, how little is that which I do! How short the time I spend in preparing myself to receive Holy Communion! Seldom am I wholly collected; very seldom indeed am I cleansed from all distractions of mind. And yet, surely in the life-giving Presence of Thy Godhead no unbecoming thought ought to intrude itself; none but Thee should occupy my heart; for it is not an Angel but the Lord of Angels whom I am about to receive as my Guest.

For great indeed is the difference between the Ark of the Covenant with its Tables of the Law, and Thy most pure and precious Body with Its inestimable virtues; great indeed is the difference between the rites of the Old Covenant, the semblance of things to come, and the True Sacrifice of Thy precious Body, the fulfilment of all the ancient sacrifices. Wherefore then am I not more ardent and zealous in seeking Thine exalted Presence? Why do I not prepare myself, with greater solicitude to receive Thy divine and holy gifts? Whereas those ancient holy Patriarchs and Prophets, yea Kings also and Princes, with the whole people, hath in times past thown such whole-hearted devotion towards Thine honour and Thy divine worship.

The most devout King David danced before the Ark of God with all his strength, calling to mind the benefits bestowed in times past upon his fore-fathers. He made divers instruments of music; he composed psalms in Thine honour and appointed them to be sung with joy; he himself oftentimes played upon the harp, being inspired of the Holy Ghost. He taught the people of Israel to praise God daily with their whole hearts, and with voices full of melody. If, then, such great devotion, such celebrating of the divine praises were kept up before the Ark of the Testament, how much greater reverence and devotion ought we to render, during the ministration of the Sacrament in receiving the most excellent Body of our Lord Jesu Christ.

Many Christians make pilgrimage to divers places to venerate the relics of the saints of God. They marvel at their deeds, behold with awe the spacious beauty of their shrines, are deeply moved by their lives, and kiss their sacred bones enveloped in silks and gold. But behold, Thou my Lord God, Saint of Saints, Creator of man and Lord of angels, art Thyself here present with me on Thine altar.

Alas! in their admiration of such shrines, pilgrims are too often moved only by curiosity and the novelty of fresh experiences. Many go from place to place with levity and without true contrition of heart, and little or no fruits of amendment are carried home. But here, in the Blessèd Sacrament of the Altar, Thou art wholly present, Very God and Very man, Jesu Christ; here, to all worthy and devout partakers, is granted the fruit of eternal salvation. There is here, nothing to distract, nothing that savours of levity or of sensual curiosity, but firm faith, devout hope, and pure love.

O God invisible, the Creator of the world, how marvellously dost Thou deal with us; how sweetly and graciously dost Thou receive them that receive Thee in this Blessèd Sacrament! For verily it surpasseth all understanding, draweth the hearts of the devout to greater devotion, and inflameth their love. Yea, even Thy true faithful ones who dispose their whole life to amendment, do oftentimes gain much grace of devotion and love of virtue from this most precious Sacrament.

O admirable and hidden grace which only the faithful ones of Christ do know! but which the unbelieving and such as are in bondage to sin can never experience. In this, Thy Sacrament, spiritual grace is conferred, the soul's lost virtue is restored, and beauty disfigured by sin regains its lost perfection. So great is this grace that out of the fullness of devotion here given, not only the mind but the feeble body also is augmented with strength.

Nevertheless our lukewarmness and negligence is exceedingly to be lamented and deplored, that we are not drawn with greater affection to receive our Lord Jesu Christ, in Whom doth consist all hope and merit of them that are to be saved. For He is our sanctification and redemption, the consolation of pilgrims, the everlasting fruition of Saints. It is therefore exceedingly to be deplored that many do so little consider, reverence and partake of this Salutary Mystery, which causeth joy in Heaven and preserveth the whole world. Alas! the blindness and hardness of the human heart, that it doth not cherish more tenderly this inestimable Gift, but, through the daily use thereof, sinks into irreverent and listless disregard of it!

If this Holy Sacrament were celebrated in one place only, and were consecrated by only one priest in all the world, with what great desire, think you, would men be drawn to that place and to such a priest of God, that they might see and participate in the celebration of these Divine Mysteries? But now many are ordained priests, and the Holy Sacrifice is offered in many places, that the grace and love of God to man may appear so much the greater, the more widely Holy Communion is spread throughout the world. Thanks be unto Thee, O merciful Jesu, Thou Shepherd Eternal, for that Thou hast vouchsafed to refresh us, poor creatures in a state of exile, with Thy precious Body and Blood, and hast invited us to be partakers of these Thy holy Mysteries by words from Thine own mouth, saying, *Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.*

CHAPTER 2

That the Great Goodness and Love of God are Shown to Man in this Sacrament

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

CONFIDENT of Thy goodness and great mercy, O Lord my Saviour, I draw near unto Thee as a sick person to the Healer, as one hungry and thirsty to the Fountain of Life, a needy mendicant to the King of Heaven, a servant to his Master, a creature to his Creator, a desolate soul to his own tender Comforter. But whereof is it that Thou thus comest to me? Who am I that Thou shouldst give Thine own Self unto me? How dare a sinner have the boldness to appear before Thee, and why dost Thou vouchsafe to come unto one such as I? Thou knowest Thy servant and understandest well that he hath in him no good thing; why then shouldst Thou grant him this grace? Therefore do I confess mine own unworthiness and acknowledge Thy goodness; I praise Thy tender mercy and give Thee thanks for Thy transcendent love. For, O Lord, Thou doest this of Thine own loving-kindness and not because of any merits of mine; to the end that Thy goodness may be better known unto me, Thy love more abundantly imparted, and that I may be able to express more fully Thy gracious humility. Since therefore this is Thy pleasure, and Thou hast commanded that it should be so, Thy condescension is pleasing unto me also, and I pray that my wickedness prove no hindrance to Thy love.

O most sweet, most benign Jesu, how great reverence, thanksgiving and perpetual praise are due unto Thee, that by Thy will and pleasure I may receive Thy sacred Body, whose preciousness no mortal tongue is able to express! On what shall my thoughts dwell as I draw near unto Thee in Communion? Thee Whom I am unable duly to honour, yet Whom I desire devoutly to receive? What thoughts could be better or more salutary than that I ought utterly to humble myself before Thee, and to exalt Thine infinite goodness above all things? O Lord God, I give Thee praise and will exalt Thy Name for ever: I do despise and cast myself down before Thee into the deep of mine own wretchedness. Behold, Thou art the Saint of Saints and I the worst of sinners, yet Thou inclinest Thyself unto me, who am not worthy to behold Thee! Behold, my Creator, how benignently Thou comest unto me; Thou willest to be with me; Thou invitest me to partake of Thy Feast. Thou art willing to give unto me the Food of Heaven and Bread of Angels, which is none other than Thyself, the Living Bread which camest down from Heaven and givest life unto the world.

Behold, how great is this love that proceedeth from Thee! What gracious pity shineth forth upon us! How great thanksgiving and praises are due unto Thee for these Thy benefits! O how salutary and profitable was Thy council when Thou didst ordain this Sacrament! How sweet and pleasant the banquet when Thou givest Thyself to be our food!

O Lord, how admirable are Thy ways! how mighty Thy virtue! how infallible Thy truth! Thou didst speak the Word and all things were made; all that Thou hast commanded hath been brought to pass.

How wonderful is this thing, worthy of all faith, and far surpassing the understanding of man, that Thou O Lord my God, True God and man, art wholly contained in a little likeness of Bread and Wine, and art received without consuming him that so receiveth Thee! Thou who art the Lord of the Universe, and standest in need of none, art pleased to dwell in us by means of this Thy Holy Sacrament. Lord, preserve my heart and body undefiled, to the end that, with a pure and joyful conscience, I may, for my eternal salvation, frequently celebrate and receive these sacred Mysteries, which Thou didst ordain and institute for Thine honour and a perpetual remembrance.

Rejoice, O my soul, and give thanks unto God for so noble a gift and so precious a comfort bestowed unto thee in this vale of tears. For as often as thou callest to mind this Mystery and receiveth the Blessèd Body of our Lord, thou dost enact and further the work of thy redemption, and art made partaker of all the merits of Christ. For the love of Christ is never diminished, and the greatness of His propitiation is never exhausted. Wherefore thou oughtest to dispose thyself hereunto by a constant renewal of spiritual power, and to meditate deeply upon the great Mystery of salvation. So great, so new, and so joyful ought it to seem unto thee when thou celebratest or hearest Mass, as though this very day Christ our Lord first descended into the womb of the Virgin Mary to be made man; or, hanging on the Cross, didst suffer and die for the salvation of mankind.

CHAPTER 3

That it is Profitable to Communicate Often

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

O LORD, I come unto Thee that spiritual well-being may come unto me through Thy gift, and that I may rejoice in the holy feast that Thou, of Thy tender benignity, hast prepared for me, a poor sinner; for my Saviour is all that I can or ought to desire. Thou art my Salvation and my Redemption, my Hope, Strength, Honour and Joy. Rejoice therefore this day the soul of Thy servant. For, O Lord Jesu, I lift my soul unto Thee and now desire devoutly and reverently to receive Thee. I yearn to bring Thee into my house, that, with Zaccheus, I may be counted worthy to receive Thy blessing, and to be numbered amongst the children of Abraham. My soul longeth to receive Thy Body; my heart longeth to be united with Thee.

Give Thyself unto me, good Lord, and it sufficeth; for without Thee there is neither comfort nor consolation; without Thee I have no existence; and without Thy visitation I cannot live. Wherefore I must needs often draw near unto Thee and receive Thee, the balm of my salvation; for if I be deprived of Thy heavenly Food, which nourisheth my soul, I shall fall by the way. For Thou, most merciful Lord Jesu, once didst say, when preaching to the people, and healing them of divers diseases, *I will not send them fasting to their own homes, lest they faint on the way.*

Deal with me, good Lord, in like manner; Thou who hast vouchsafed to perpetuate Thyself in this Holy Sacrament for the comfort of the faithful; for Thou art the sweet refection of the souls of them that worthily receive Thee, and they shall be the inheritors and partakers of eternal joy. Of a surety it is necessary for me, who so often fall into sin, whose fervour cooleth so quickly, and who hourly faileth in the things of the spirit, that by frequent prayer and confession, and by the receiving of Thy Holy Body, I may purify and renew my zeal, lest peradventure, by too long abstaining, I fall away from my holy purpose.

For, from his youth, the desires of man are prone to all evil; and if he partake not of Thy divine remedy he by and by falleth into still greater sins. The Holy Communion therefore restraineth men from evil and strengtheneth them in goodness. For if I be now so often negligent and lukewarm when I celebrate or communicate, what would become of me if I received not this remedy, nor sought so great a help? And although I may not be fit nor well prepared to celebrate every day, yet will I endeavour at the appointed times to receive Thy Divine Mysteries and become a partaker of Thy grace. For the chief consolation of the faithful soul absent from Thee on pilgrimage in this mortal body is that, being ever mindful of God, she shall the more often devoutly receive her Belovèd in the Sacrament.

O the wonder of Thy marvellous gentleness, the condescension of Thy tender mercy towards us, that Thou, O Lord God, Creator and Giver of Life to all Spirits, dost vouchsafe to come unto one poor soul, and, with Thy Whole Divinity and Humanity, abundantly satisfy her famishing hunger! O happy the mind and blessèd the soul, that fervently desireth to receive Thee, her Lord and Creator, with devout love, and in receiving Thee is filled with spiritual joy! O how great a Lord doth the soul entertain! how beloved a Guest doth she harbour! how delightful a Companion doth she receive! how faithful a Friend doth she welcome! how beautiful and noble a Bridegroom doth she embrace! even He who is to be loved and desired above all others. O Thou my most tender, most belovèd Lord, let heaven and earth in all their loveliness keep silence before Thee! For whatsoever they possess of praise and beauty is bestowed by Thy mercy and bounty, and cannot be compared to the honour and glory of Thy Holy Name, Whose wisdom is infinite and beyond the understanding of man.

CHAPTER 4

That many Benefits are Bestowed upon them that Communicate Devoutly

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

O LORD my God, I do humbly beseech Thee to present Thy servant with the blessings of Thy sweetness and goodness, that I may be enabled worthily and devoutly to approach Thy glorious Sacrament. Stir up my heart toward Thee, and set me free from the dull listlessness of this mortal body: visit me with Thy salvation, that my spirit may taste Thy sweetness, which, as in a fountain, is plentifully concealed in this Sacrament. Enlighten also mine eyes to behold so great a Mystery, and fortify my faith and belief in its holy efficacy. For this is Thy work, and beyond the power of man; Thy sacred ordinance, which is not of man's devising. For no man of himself is able to comprehend and understand these things, which transcend even the matchless knowledge of the Angels. How then shall I, an unworthy sinner, who am but dust and ashes, be able to search out and comprehend so high and sacred a Mystery?

O Lord, by Thy commandment, I draw near unto Thee with hope and reverence, firm in faith and with true simplicity of heart, and I do truly believe that Thou art here present in this Holy Sacrament, Very God and Very Man. It is Thy will that I should receive Thee and that I should be united to Thee in love. Wherefore I implore Thy mercy, and do crave that Thou grant Thy especial grace unto me to this end; that I may wholly be dissolved and overflow with love toward Thee, and seek hereafter only Thy divine consolation. For this most high and precious Sacrament is the health both of soul and body, the remedy for all spiritual sickness; by its virtue are my vices subjugated, my passions bridled, my temptations overcome or diminished; greater grace is infused, virtue begun is increased, faith is confirmed, hope strengthened, and love kindled and augmented.

O God, the Protector and Defender of my soul, the Restorer of human weakness, and the Giver of all inward consolation, Thou hast bestowed, and still daily dost bestow upon Thy belovèd servants who communicate devoutly, the many benefits of this Thy holy sacrament. For Thou dost impart unto their souls much comfort against every kind of tribulation, liftest them up from the depth of their own dejected state to hope in Thy protection, and dost inwardly recreate and enlighten them with new grace; so that they who come to Communion full of anxiety and heavy-hearted, do afterwards, being refreshed with Food from Heaven, do find themselves strengthened in spirit and faith. In this manner, by the grace and bounty of Thy dispensation, dealest Thou with Thy faithful servants, in order that they may truly acknowledge, and clearly prove how great is their own infirmity, and how salutary the goodness and grace they obtain from Thee. For they of themselves are cold, hard, and undevout; but by virtue of Thy sacrament they are enabled to become fervent, cheerful and devout. For who, approaching with reverence and humility unto the Fountain of Grace, doth not carry therefrom at least some little sweetness? Or who, standing near a large fire, receiveth not some small heat therefrom? And Thou art a Fountain ever full and overflowing; Thou art the ever-burning fire which can never be extinguished.

Wherefore if I am not permitted to draw from the full Fountain itself, nor to drink my fill, I will, notwithstanding, set my lips to the mouth of this Heavenly outlet, that I may receive from thence at least some drops to allay my thirst, and may not quite wither away. And though I may not as yet be perfect, or imbued with spiritual ardour like unto that of the Cherubim and Seraphim, yet will I endeavour earnestly to apply myself to devotion, and to prepare my heart to obtain even a spark of divine fire, by receiving with fitting humility this holy life-giving Sacrament. O merciful Jesu, Most Holy Saviour, do Thou, I beseech Thee, bountifully and graciously supply whatsoever is wanting in me—Thou Who hast vouchsafed to call all unto Thee, saying, *Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.*

But alas! Good Lord, I, a poor sinner, do labour in the sweat of my brow, my heart is wracked with grief I am burdened by my sins, I am troubled with my temptations, I am entangled and oppressed by many evil passions; and there is none to deliver me, save Thou, O Lord God my Saviour, to Whom I commit myself and all that is mine, that Thou mayest keep watch over me, and lead me unto life eternal. Receive me for the honour and glory of Thy Name, Thou Who hast prepared Thy Body and Blood to be my food and drink. O Lord God, my Saviour, grant unto me of Thy great bounty, that by the frequent partaking of Thy Holy Mysteries, the zeal of my devotion may grow continuously.

CHAPTER 5

Of the Dignity of the Sacrament, and of the Priestly Office

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

IF thou hadst the purity of angels, and the sanctity of Saint John the Baptist, thou wouldst still be unworthy to receive or to handle this Sacrament. For it is not by virtue of any merits of their own that men consecrate and administer the Sacrament of Christ, and receive as food the Bread of Angels. Great is this Office, and great the dignity of the priests of God to whom hath been granted that which is not permitted to the Angels. For none but duly ordained priests of the Church have power to celebrate and to consecrate the Body of Christ. The Priest is the servant of God, instituted by God, and using the Word of God by God's own command and appointment. Nevertheless God Himself is the principal Author and invisible

Worker, to Whose will all things are subject, and whose commands all must obey.

In this most excellent Sacrament, therefore, thou oughtest to trust Almighty God more than thine own senses, or any visible sign. Therefore when thou dost approach the Altar, let it be with awe and reverence. Take heed to thyself, and consider how thou wert ordained to this Office by the laying-on of the Bishop's hands. Behold, thou hast been made a Priest and consecrated to celebrate the Lord's Sacrament; see, to it then, that thou offer this sacrifice to God faithfully and devoutly, and at the times appointed, and so conduct thyself that thy life is irreproachable and unblemished. Thou hast not lightened thy burden, but art now bound with a stricter cord of discipline, and pledged to a more perfect degree of sanctity. A Priest ought to be adorned with all virtues, his life holy and an example to others. Furthermore his conversation should not be like unto that of vulgar and worldly men, but like unto that of the Angels in Heaven, or perfect men on earth.

A Priest clothed in sacred vestments is the vice-regent of Christ, that, with due humility, he may intercede with God for himself and for the whole people. He weareth before and behind him the Sign of the Cross, that he may be ever mindful of the Passion of Christ. Before him, on his Chasuble, the Cross signifieth that his constant endeavour must be to walk diligently in his Master's footsteps. Behind him, the Cross signifieth that he must be ever ready to endure forgivingly, for the love of God, whatsoever of suffering or rebuke may be inflicted upon him by others. Before him, he is sealed with the Cross that he may grieve over his own sins; behind him he weareth the Cross that he may, with true compassion, lament the sins of others, remembering always that he is the mediator between God and the sinner. Neither may he cease from prayer and the Holy Oblation, until he himself is deserving of, and obtaineth, God's grace and mercy. When a Priest doth celebrate the Eucharist, he honoureth God, he rejoiceth the Angels, he edifieth the Church, he helpeth the living, he obtaineth rest for souls departed, and maketh himself a participator in all good works.

CHAPTER 6

Concerning Spiritual Exercise before Communion

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

O LORD, when I contemplate Thy dignity and mine own vileness, I am exceedingly afraid and am inwardly confused. For if I come not unto Thee, I reject Thy gift of life eternal, and if I receive Thee unworthily, I incur Thy displeasure. What, then, shall I do, O God, my Helper and my Counsellor in all necessities?

O Lord, teach me the right way. Set before me some brief exercise commendable to the receiving of Holy Communion. For it is necessary for me, and greatly to my enrichment, to know how I ought to prepare my heart with devotion and reverence to receive this Holy Sacrament of my Soul's salvation, and fittingly to celebrate so great and divine a Sacrifice.

CHAPTER 7

Of Thoroughly Searching our own Conscience, and of Holy Purposes of Amendment

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

ABOVE all things, a priest of God ought to prepare to celebrate, touch, and receive this Sacrament with deep humility of heart, suppliant reverence, a full faith, and dutiful concern for God's honour. Examine diligently thy conscience, and, to the utmost of thy power, purify and cleanse it by true contrition and humble confession; so that no inward sense of guilt may weigh heavily upon thee, or breed in thee remorse of conscience, thus hindering thy free access to the Blessèd Sacrament. Think with sorrow of thy sins in general, and more particularly of those that from day to day beset thee. And, if thou hast time, confess unto God in the secret of thine heart the base nature of thy disordered passions.

Lament with pain and sorrow that thou art yet so carnal and worldly, so undisciplined in thy passions, so full of sensual desires. So unguarded in thine outward senses; so often entangled with many vain fancies; so much inclined to worldly things, so negligent in things inward and spiritual. So prone to unseemly laughter and mirth; so hard of heart and indisposed to sorrow and penitence; so prompt to self indulgence; so averse to zeal; so lacking in discipline. So eager to hear what is new and see what is desirable; so reluctant to embrace what is simple and humble; so covetous of abundance, so niggardly in giving, so tenacious in keeping. So inconsiderate in speech, so reluctant to keep silent; so unruly in manners, so restless in conduct; so unrestrained in eating; so deaf to the Word of God. So ready to seek rest, so slow to labour; so alert to gossip, so drowsy at the nightly vigils, so anxious to arrive at the end thereof, so inclined to be wandering and inattentive. So negligent at the Hours, so lukewarm in celebrating, so dry and heartless in communicating; so quickly distracted so seldom completely self-collected; so easily moved to anger, so quick to take offence against another; so ready to censure, so severe in reproof; so joyful in prosperity but so weak in adversity. So primed with good intentions, so remiss in carrying them into effect.

When thou hast confessed these and others of thy failings and deplored with contrition and sorrow thine own weaknesses, make thou a firm resolution to constantly amend thy life and to progress in all the things of the Spirit. Then with complete resignation and with thine entire will, offer thyself up wholly, body and soul, on the altar of thy heart, a perpetual burnt offering to the honour of My Name. Thus mayest thou be accounted worthy to draw near to celebrate the Sacrifice of the Eucharist, and to receive the Sacrament of My Body for thy soul's health.

For there is no oblation more worthy, nor any more truly cleansing of sin, than the offering of oneself purely and wholly unto God, in and with the Body of Christ in the Mass and in the Communion. *I Who live*, sayeth the Lord, *will not the death of a sinner, but rather that he be con-*

verted and live; wherefore, when a man hath done what lieth in him, and is truly penitent, howsoever often he shall come to Me for pardon and grace, I will remember his sins no more, but all shall be forgiven him.

CHAPTER 8

Of the Oblation of Christ on the Cross

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

As I of Mine own will didst freely offer Myself unto God the Father for thy sins, My hands outstretched upon the Cross, and My Body naked and laid bare, so that nothing remained in Me that was not wholly turned into a sacrifice of Divine atonement: in like manner thou oughtest also to offer thyself willingly unto Me every day in the Mass, as a pure and sacred oblation, with all thy strength and love, and as profoundly as thou art able to do. I require no less of thee than that thou strive to entrust thyself entirely unto Me. Whatsoever thou givest besides thyself hath no value in My sight; for I seek not thy gifts, but thee.

As it would suffice thee naught to possess all worldly things whatsoever except Me, so, too, nothing whatsoever that thou givest save thyself alone is acceptable unto Me. Offer thyself unto Me, and give thyself wholly to God, and thine offering shall be accepted. Behold, I offered Myself wholly unto My Father for thee; I gave also My very Body and Blood for thy food, that I might be wholly thine and that thou mightest be Mine for ever. But if thou rely upon thyself, and dost not offer thyself freely unto My will, the oblation is not complete, and there cannot be perfect union between us. If, then, thou desirest to obtain freedom and grace, freely to offer thyself into the hands of God is the first essential. The reason why so few attain to inward light and freedom is because they cannot endure wholly to deny themselves. My words remain unalterable: *Unless a man forsake all, he cannot be My disciple*. If therefore thou desire to be my disciple, offer thyself unto Me with thy whole heart.

CHAPTER 9

That We ought to Offer up Ourselves and all that is ours unto God

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

O LORD, all things that are in Heaven and earth are Thine. I desire to offer myself unto Thee, willingly and freely and to be Thine for ever. O Lord, in the simplicity of my heart I offer myself unto Thee this day to be Thy servant for ever. This I do in humble submission, and as a sacrifice of perpetual praise.

Receive Thou me, with this Holy Oblation of Thy precious Body, which I make to Thee this day, angels invisible attending; and may this further my own salvation and that of all Thy people.

Lord, upon Thine Altar of Propitiation I offer unto Thee all my sins and offences which I have committed before

Thee and Thy holy angels, from the day wherein I first didst sin, even to this hour; that Thou mayest burn and consume them in the fire of Thy love, and cleanse my soul of sin and my conscience from all offences. Restore to me, O Lord, Thy grace which I forfeited by sin, grant me full forgiveness and, of Thy mercy, the kiss of peace.

What can I do in regard to my sins, but humbly confess and lament them, and unceasingly implore Thy propitiation? O God, I entreat Thee, hear my petition when I stand before Thee. All my sins are exceedingly displeasing to me, and I will endeavour never more to commit them. I grieve for them now, and will grieve for them as long as I live, and am resolved to do penance, and make restitution to the utmost of my power. Forgive me, O God, forgive me my sins for the honour of Thy holy Name; save Thou my soul, which Thou hast redeemed with Thy Precious Blood. Behold, I commit myself unto Thy mercy; I resign myself into Thy hands. Deal with me according to Thy goodness, and not according to my sinfulness and iniquity.

I also offer unto Thee all that is good in me, small and imperfect though it be, in order that Thou mayest strengthen and sanctify it, making it more worthy and acceptable unto Thee, and raising it more and more to greater perfection. And grant me, O Lord, an indolent and unprofitable sinner, a blessèd and praiseworthy end.

Moreover I offer unto Thee all the pious aspirations of devout souls; the needs of parents, kindred and friends and of all who are dear unto me, or who, for love of Thee, have done good to myself and to others. Also I commend unto Thee all who have desired of me to pray and offer Masses for them, or those near and dear to them, whether here present in the body or gathered unto Thy Kingdom. Grant, O Lord, that all such may enjoy the ever present help of Thy grace, the aid of Thy consolation, protection from dangers, deliverance from punishment; and that, being rescued from all evils, they may offer abundant thanksgiving unto Thee with exceeding joy.

I also offer unto Thee my Sacramental prayers and intercessions, especially for those who have in any way injured, grieved, maligned or found fault with me, or who have done me harm or incurred my displeasure. For all those also, whom I myself at any time vexed, troubled, burdened or injured by word or deed, whether knowingly or unknowingly; that Thou mayest of Thy great mercy grant us all alike pardon for our sins, and for our offences against each other. Remove from our hearts, O Lord, all suspicion, indignation, anger, and contention, and whatsoever may impair charity or diminish brotherly love. Have mercy, O lord! Blessèd Jesu, have pity on all who crave Thy mercy; give grace unto them that stand in need thereof, and help us all so to live that we may be worthy fully to enjoy Thy grace, and go forward to life eternal. Amen.

CHAPTER 10

That Holy Communion is not to be Lightly Forgone

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

THOU oughtest often to have recourse to the Fountain of grace and of divine mercy, to the Fountain of goodness and of all purity; that thou mayest be healed of thy sins and passions and become stronger and more vigilant against the temptations and deceits of the devil. Thine enemy knoweth well the exceeding great benefit and succour that is found in the Holy Communion, and he endeavoureth at every opportunity, by every means in his power, to withdraw and hinder the faithful and devout from partaking thereof.

Thus it is that some, when they are preparing to fit themselves for Holy Communion, find the assaults of Satan to be more grievous than ever. That wicked spirit himself, as it is written in Job, cometh amongst the sons of God to perturb and trouble them with his accustomed malice, or to render them overfearful and perplexed; so that he may, by such direct assaults, diminish their devotion and undermine their faith; to the end that he may prevail on them either to forgo Communion, or to approach the Altar with lukewarmness and impaired faith. Take thou no heed whatsoever of these crafty fantasies and suggestions, however vile they may be, but let them recoil upon his own head. Scorn to obey the spirit of evil, nor ever defer

Holy Communion because of his assaults, or the commotions which he raiseth within thee.

Oftentimes also, many are hindered by a too great solicitude for devotion, or become perplexed and anxious about making confession of their sins. Follow thou herein the counsel of the wise; put aside anxiety and scruple, for these obstruct the Grace of God and destroy the devotion of the mind. Do not absent thyself from Holy Communion on account of every small vexation and trouble, but proceed at once to confess thy sins, and cheerfully forgive others whatever offences they have committed against thee. And if thou thyself hast offended any man, humbly crave pardon of God, and He will readily forgive thee.

What doth it avail thee continually to delay the confession of thy sins, or to defer Holy Communion? First cleanse thyself; spit out the poison with all speed; make haste to take this Sovereign Remedy and thou shalt find it to be better with thee than if thou long defer it. If today thou omit Communion for one cause, tomorrow another of greater force may occur to thee. Delay begets delay, and thou mayest absent thyself a long time from Communion, growing more and more unworthy. Therefore shake off thine apathy now. Why continue to suffer disquiet of mind and conscience by imagining day to day impediments to the Divine Mysteries? It is exceedingly hurtful to continuously defer Communion, for this results in grievous spiritual apathy. Alas, some lukewarm and lax persons all too readily delay confession and defer Holy Communion, lest they should be obliged to keep a stricter watch over themselves.

O how poor the love, how feeble the devotion of those who lightly put off Holy Communion! How happy, how acceptable to God, is he who ordereth his life and guardeth his conscience in such purity that he is prepared and well disposed to communicate every day, were it in his power to do so with becoming privacy. If a person do sometimes abstain out of humility, or by reason of some lawful preventive cause, he is to be commended for his reverence. But if he become the victim of spiritual apathy, he must bestir himself and do what lieth in him, and the Lord will strengthen his good intention, which is what God chiefly regardeth.

He who of his own goodwill and pious intention is eager to communicate but is prevented by any lawful hindrance, shall not lose the fruit of the Sacrament. For it is within the power of every devout soul every day and every hour, without let or hindrance, to profit in spirit by drawing near to Christ in spiritual communion. Nevertheless on certain days, and at the times appointed, he ought to receive Sacramentally, with love and reverence, the Body of his Redeemer, seeking the honour and glory of God rather than his own consolation. For as often as he communicateth mystically and is invisibly refreshed, thus often doth he devoutly call to mind the mystery of the Incarnation and Passion of Christ, and is inflamed with His love.

He that prepareth not himself save only when a festival draweth near, or when custom compelleth him thereunto, shall often be unprepared. Blessèd is he that, as often as he doth administer or receive Holy Communion, offereth himself up as a living sacrifice to the Lord. Be neither too slow nor yet too hurried in celebrating, but conform to the practice of those with whom thou livest. Be not tedious, so that thou art the cause of weariness in others, but observe the established custom as appointed by the Fathers; and yield thyself up to the edification of others rather than to thine own devotion and feelings.

CHAPTER 11

That the Body of Christ and the Holy Scriptures are Most Necessary to the Faithful Soul

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

O MOST sweet Lord Jesus, how great is the joy of the devout soul who feasteth with Thee in Thy banquet, for there is set before her food none other than Thyself, her only-Belovèd, and more to be longed for than all the desires of her heart! And I too, moved by the intensity of my inward devotion, long for Thy presence, and, with the loving Magdalen to wash Thy feet with my tears. But where, Lord, is this devotion? Where this flood of holy tears? Surely, in Thy presence and that of Thy holy Angels, my whole heart should be inflamed and to weep for joy. For Thou art verily present in this Sacrament, though hidden in another form.

For mine eyes could not endure to behold the reality of Thy full glory and brightness, nor could the whole world bear the splendour of Thy divine majesty. Herein, then, Thou takest account of my frailty, and dost veil

Thyself in this Sacrament. Herein I truly possess and adore Him to Whom the Angels give adoration in Heaven; I, meantime, by faith only, but they do see Thee unveiled in glory. I must content myself with the light of true faith, and walk therein till there dawneth the day of everlasting brightness, and the shadows of forms shall have passed away. But when that which is perfect is come, the need for sacraments shall be ended. The Blessèd in their Heavenly Glory have no need of sacramental healing, for they rejoice endlessly in the presence of God, and behold His glory face to face; and transformed from brightness to brightness of Deity unfathomable, they taste the Word of God made flesh, as He was from the beginning, and as He eternally remaineth.

When I contemplate these wonders, even the consolations of the spirit become tedious and burdensome unto me, for as long as I behold not my Lord unveiled in His full glory, I count as nothing all that I see and hear in this world. Thou, O God, art my witness that nothing created can comfort or bring me rest, save Thou alone, Whom I long to contemplate everlastingly. But this I cannot do while sojourning in this mortal life, but must exercise myself greatly in patience, and be submissive in my every desire unto Thee.

For thus it was with Thy Saints, O Lord. They also, during their sojourn in this world, awaited in faith and great patience the advent of Thy glory, and now rejoice with Thee in the Kingdom of Heaven. What they believed, I believe; what they hoped for, I hope for; and whither they are arrived, I, by Thy grace, hope to arrive also. Meantime I will walk in faith, strengthened by the example of the Saints. Moreover I have for my solace, and mirror of my life, Thy holy scriptures; but above all else Thy most holy Body for my especial remedy and refuge.

Two things are sovereignly necessary to me, without which this miserable life would be wholly insupportable. Whilst my soul inhabits the prisonhouse of the body, food and light are essential to my existence. Therefore hast Thou, in my weakness, given unto me Thy sacred Body for the nourishment of my soul and body, and hast set Thy word as a lamp unto my feet. Without these two I could not live well: for the Word of God is the light of my soul, and Thy Sacrament the Bread of Life. These also can be likened unto two tables set one on either side of the treasure-house of holy Church. One table is that of the sacred altar, having upon it the holy Bread, the precious Body of Christ; the other is that of the Divine Law, containing holy doctrine, that right faith which leadeth man unerringly onward, even to the things within the veil, where is the Holy of Holies.

O Lord Jesus, Light of Light eternal, thanks be unto Thee for the table of holy doctrine which Thou hast given unto us through Thy servants, Prophets, Apostles, and other teachers. Thanks be unto Thee, Creator and Redeemer of mankind, Who, in witness of Thy love for the whole world, hast prepared a great Supper, wherein Thou hast set before us to be eaten, not the Lamb of the Old Covenant, but Thy most sacred Body and Blood; rejoicing the faithful with this sacred Banquet, and filling them with the cup of Salvation, in which are all the delights of Paradise. And

Thy holy Angels do feast with us, but with more delectable sweetness.

O how great and honourable is the office of the priesthood, to which is given power to consecrate with sacred words the Lord of Glory, to bless Him with their lips, to hold Him in their hands, to receive Him in their mouths, and to administer Him to others! O how clean should be the hands, how pure the mouth, how holy the body, how immaculate the heart of the priest, into whom the Author of purity so often entereth. Out of the mouth of a priest, who so often receiveth the Sacrament of Christ, there should issue no word which is not holy, upright and profitable. Simple and chaste should be the eyes that so often behold the Body of Christ. Pure, and lifted towards Heaven, should be the hands that touch the Creator of Heaven and earth. For to priests especially is addressed the words of the Law: *Be ye holy, for that I the Lord your God am holy.*

O Almighty God, grant that we who have undertaken the priestly office be assisted by Thy grace; that we may be enabled to serve Thee worthily and devoutly in all purity and with a good conscience. And if we fail to live continuously in that state of innocency to which we aspire, let us then lament our sins, and, with a humble spirit, firm intention, and good will, resolve to serve Thee henceforth with still greater fervency.

CHAPTER 12

That He Who is About to Communicate with Christ ought to Prepare Himself with Great Diligence

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

I AM the Lover of purity and the Giver of Sanctity. I seek the pure heart, and there is My place of rest. Make ready for me a large upper room furnished, and I will keep the Passover at thy house with My Disciples. If thou wilt have Me come unto thee, and remain with thee, purge out the old leaven, and make clean the habitation of thy heart. Shut out the world and its tumultuous vices; sit thou as it were a sparrow alone upon the house-top, and ponder thy transgressions in the bitterness of thy soul. For every one that loveth prepareth for his belovèd the best and fairest place, for thus he showeth the measure of his affection.

Nevertheless no merits or labours of thine own are a sufficient preparation to receive Me, even if thou wert to prepare thyself a whole year together, thy mind devoted to this one purpose. Of My grace and mercy alone art thou permitted to approach My altar; as if a beggar were invited to sup with a rich man, and could make no return other than that of humble thanks and gratitude. Do what lieth in thee, and do it diligently. Not from custom or necessity, but with awe, reverence and affection, receive thou the Body of thy belovèd Lord God, when He deigneth to come unto thee. I am He that calleth thee; I have commanded it so to be done; I will supply whatsoever is lacking in thee; wherefore, come thou and receive Me.

When I bestow on thee the grace of devotion, give thanks unto God; not because thou art worthy, but because I have had mercy upon thee. If thou have not this grace, and dost suffer an aridness of soul, persevere in prayer, sigh and knock, and give not over until thou meritest to receive some crumb or drop of saving grace. Thou hast need of Me, not I of thee. Neither comest thou to sanctify Me; I come to sanctify and better thee. Thou comest that thou mayest be sanctified by Me and made one with Me; that thou mayest receive new grace, and be stirred up anew to amend thy life. Take heed that thou neglect not this grace, but diligently prepare thy heart to receive thy Belovèd Lord.

Thou oughtest however not only devoutly to prepare thyself for Holy Communion, but carefully to foster thy devotion after thou hast received the Sacrament. To guard thyself vigilantly after Communion is as needful and important as devout preparation before thou comest to the Altar; and constant vigilance thereafter is the best preparation if thou art to obtain still greater grace. For if thereafter a man straightway giveth himself up to outward consolations and worldly pleasures, he is rendered thereby greatly averse to devotion. Beware of much talk. Choose some secret place where thou canst feel God's presence; for thou hast in Him One whom all the world cannot take from thee. I am He to whom thou oughtest wholly to yield thyself, so that, freed from all anguish of mind, thou mayest henceforth live not in thyself, but only in Me.

CHAPTER 13

That the Devout Soul ought with the Whole Heart to Seek Union with Christ in the Sacrament

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

LORD, who will grant unto me to find Thee alone, to open unto Thee my whole heart, and enjoy Thee even as my soul desireth; that henceforth none may despise me, nor any creature move me nor have regard to me; but that Thou alone mayest speak unto me, and I to Thee, as the lover is wont to speak to his belovèd, and the friend to cherish his friend. O Lord, this I entreat, this I long for: that I may be wholly united unto Thee, and my heart withdrawn from all created things; that by virtue of Holy Communion and the frequent celebrating thereof, I may learn more and more to relish things heavenly and eternal. Ah, Lord God, when shall I attain at-one-ment with Thee, become absorbed in Thee, and become wholly selfless? Thou in me, and I in Thee; grant that we may abide thus forever.

Verily, Thou art my Belovèd, the Choicest among thousands, in Whom my soul delighteth to dwell all the days of her life. Verily, Thou art He in Whom the soul finds sovereign peace and true rest; without Whom is labour and sorrow and infinite misery. Verily, Thou art a God that hidest Thyself; Thy counsel is not with the wicked, but Thou speakest unto the lowly and simple of heart. O Lord, how sweet is Thy Spirit, Who, that Thou mightest show forth Thy tenderness toward Thy children, dost vouchsafe to refresh them with the Bread which is full of all sweetness, even that which cometh down from Heaven. Of a truth, there is no other nation so great, that hath gods so nigh unto them, as Thou our God art present to all Thy faithful; unto whom, for their daily comfort, and for the raising up of their hearts to Heaven, Thou givest of Thyself to be partaken of and enjoyed.

For what other nation is there of such high renown as the Christian people? Or what creature under heaven is so beloved as the devout soul into which God Himself entereth, to nourish her with his glorious Body? O unspeakable grace! O admirable condescension! O immeasurable love, bestowed on man alone! But what return shall I make unto the Lord for His divine grace, for love so unparalleled? There is nothing that I am able to present more acceptable than my heart, the which I offer wholly to God so that it may be inwardly united unto Him. When my soul is perfectly united unto God, then shall my entire being be filled with joy. Then will He say unto me: *If thou wilt dwell in Me, I will dwell in thee.* And I will answer Him: *Vouchsafe, O Lord, to dwell in me; I will gladly dwell in Thee. My whole desire is that my heart be made one with Thee.*

CHAPTER 14

Of the Fervent Desire of the Devout to Receive the Body of Christ

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

HOW great is the abundance of Thy sweetness, O Lord, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee. When, O Lord, I call to mind certain devout souls who approach Thy Sacrament with fervent devotion and love, I am oftentimes inwardly confounded and overcome with shame that I come to Thine Altar and the Table of Holy Communion with such lukewarmness, yea, even coldness. I grieve that I remain so arid, that my heart is so empty of love; that I am not wholly inflamed in Thy presence, O my God, nor so earnestly drawn and affected as are so many truly ardent souls. For they, out of a vehement desire for Communion, and because of the love of Thee in their hearts, were unable to hold back their tears, but with mouth, heart and body, their inmost being yearned for Thee, O God, the living Fountain. For how otherwise could they allay or satisfy their hunger than by receiving Thy Body with all joy and eagerness of spirit?

O, the truly ardent faith of such souls, that beareth witness to Thy sacred Presence! For they, whose hearts burn so vehemently within them, do truly know their Lord in the breaking of bread, when Thou, O Blessèd Jesu, dost walk with them. Alas that such affection and devotion, love so fervent and strong, are too often far from me! O benign Jesu, merciful, sweet and gracious Lord, be Thou compassionate unto me, and grant to Thy poor mendicant to feel at least sometimes in Holy Communion some measure of Thy deep and heartfelt love; that my Faith may become stronger, my Hope in Thy goodness increase, and that, having tasted of Thy Heavenly Manna, Thy love thus perfectly enkindled within me may never die.

O Lord, of Thy bountiful mercy, grant me even the grace I long for, and, in the day when it shall please Thee, most graciously visit me with the Spirit of fervour. For, although I burn not with vehement desire like unto that of Thy ardently devout servants, yet do I yearn for this mighty fire of the Spirit, praying and longing that, by Thy grace, I may participate with all who fervently love Thee, and be numbered in their holy company.

CHAPTER 15

That Grace of Devotion is Obtained by Humility and Self-Denial

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

THOU oughtest to seek the grace of devotion earnestly, to ask it fervently, to wait for it with patience and confidence, to receive it with thankfulness, to keep it humbly, to work with it diligently, and to commit to God the time and manner of this heavenly visitation until it shall please Him to come unto thee. Thou oughtest especially to humble thyself when thou feelest little or no inward devotion; but neither be too much dejected, nor grieve inordinately. God often giveth in one short moment, that which He hath for a long time withheld. Sometimes He giveth at the end, that which in the beginning of thy prayer He denied thee.

Were grace always given immediately and at our wish, weak man could not well bear it. Therefore the grace of devotion is to be waited for with good hope and humble patience. Nevertheless, when this grace is withheld, or when it is secretly taken from thee, impute this to thyself and to thine own sins. It is sometimes but a small thing that hindereth or hideth grace; if indeed anything that obstructeth so great a good can be called small, and not momentous. But if thou remove this hindrance, be it great or small, and perfectly overcome it, thou shalt attain thy desire.

For immediately thou yieldest thyself to God with thy whole heart, and seekest nothing for thine own will or pleasure, but resteth thyself wholly in Him, thou shalt find at-one-ment and peace; for nothing can bestow so sweet a relish, nothing bring such lasting happiness, as the good pleasure of the Divine will. Whosoever, therefore, with singleness of purpose, directeth his intention to God, expunging from his heart all inordinate liking or disliking of any created thing, shall be fit to receive grace and worthy of the gift of true devotion. For the Lord bestoweth His blessings where He findeth the vessels empty to receive them. The more a person forsaketh created things, and dieth to self, the more speedily God's grace cometh, and plentifully entereth in; and the higher it uplifteth the freed heart.

Then shalt he see, and flow together, and wonder, and his heart shall be enlarged within him, for the hand of the Lord is with him, and he hath put himself wholly into His hand forever. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who seeketh God with his whole heart; he hath not received his soul in vain. Such an one, in receiving the Holy Eucharist, obtaineth the great grace of Divine Union; for he looketh not to his own devotion and consolation, but placeth above all devotion and consolation the honour and glory of God.

CHAPTER 16

That We Ought to lay open our Necessities to Christ, and to crave his Grace

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

O THOU most sweet and loving Lord, Whom I now desire to receive with all devotion, Thou knowest my weaknesses, and the necessity which I endure; how great are the evils and vices that ensnare me; how often I am weighed down, tempted, troubled, and defiled by them. Unto Thee I come for healing; I entreat Thy consolation and support. I speak to Thee Who knowest all things, to Whom all my secret thoughts are laid bare, and Who alone canst perfectly solace and help me. Thou knowest what goodnesses I stand most in need of; how lacking I am in virtues.

Behold, I stand before Thee poor and naked, calling for grace and imploring Thy mercy. Refresh Thy hungering suppliant, inflame my coldness with the fire of Thy love, enlighten my blindness with the brightness of Thy presence. Do Thou, for me, turn all earthly things into bitterness, all things grievous and contrary into occasions for patience; expunge from my mind and cast into oblivion all that is base and unworthy. Lift up my heart to Thee in heaven, that I become not a fugitive and a wanderer upon the earth. Be Thou my sole delight from henceforth for evermore; for Thou alone art my food and drink, my love and my joy, my sweetness and my supreme good.

O that by Thy presence Thou wouldst wholly inflame, consume, and transform me into Thyself; that I might be made one Spirit with Thee by the grace of inward union, and the fusion of ardent love! Suffer me not to go from Thee hungry and athirst, but deal mercifully with me, as oftentimes Thou hast dealt wonderfully with Thy Saints. How great an wonder it is that I should be wholly inflamed by Thee, that, dying to self, I become one with Thee. For Thou, O Lord, art the eternal, ever-burning Fire; Thy love purifieth the heart and enlighteneth the understanding!

CHAPTER 17

Of Ardent Love, and Vehement Desire to Receive Christ

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE:

WITH deep devotion and ardent love, with all affection and fervour of heart, I long to receive Thee, O Lord, in Holy Communion, even as did many Saints and devout souls, whose holiness of life and fervent devotion were most pleasing unto Thee. O my God, Eternal Love, my supreme Good and limitless Happiness, I desire to receive Thee with the same burning devotion, the same becoming awe and reverence, as ever the Saints did feel, or could feel, toward Thee.

And although I am unworthy to harbour all those feelings of devotion, nevertheless I offer unto Thee the whole love of my heart, as though I alone were animated by those most sincere and ardent longings. Yea, all that a pious mind can conceive and desire, I offer and present unto Thee, with deepest reverence and inward zeal. I desire to withhold nothing of myself, but freely and most willingly to sacrifice myself and all that is mine unto Thee. O Lord my God, my Creator and Redeemer, I desire to receive Thee this day with such affection, reverence, praise, and honour; with such gratitude, worthiness, and love; with such faith, hope and purity, as Thy most holy Mother, the glorious Virgin Mary, desired to receive Thee, when, to the Angel who announced unto her the joyful tidings of the mystery of the Incarnation, she humbly and devoutly answered: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word.*

And as Thy blessèd forerunner, most excellent of Saints, John the Baptist, rejoicing in Thy presence, leapt for joy of the Holy Spirit whilst he was yet in his mother's womb; and afterwards seeing Jesus walking among men, greatly humbled himself, and said with devout love; *The friend of the bridegroom that standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice;* in like manner, I desire to be inflamed with great and holy desires, and to offer myself up to Thee with my whole heart. Wherefore also, for myself, and for all who have been commended to my prayers, I offer and present unto Thee the triumphant joys, the ardent affections, the holy ecstasies, the supernatural illuminations and heavenly visions of all devout souls; together with all the virtues and praises celebrated, and to be celebrated, by all creatures in Heaven and earth, that Thou mayest be worthily praised and glorified forever.

Accept, O Lord my God, my vows and my desires to give Thee infinite praise and boundless blessing; which, by reason of Thine unutterable greatness, are most justly due unto Thee. These I render unto Thee, and long to offer them every day and every moment of time; and prayerfully and lovingly I do invite and entreat the Spirits in Heaven, and all the Faithful, to join with me in rendering thanksgiving and praise unto Thee.

Let all peoples, nations, and tongues praise Thee, and magnify Thy holy and most sweet Name, with the highest jubilation and the most ardent devotion. And may all who reverently and devoutly celebrate Thy most high Sacrament, and receive It with full faith, be accounted worthy to merit Thy grace and mercy; and may they humbly intercede for me, a sinner. And when, as the fruit of their devotion, they have attained their desire for blissful union with Thee, and have departed from Thy Sacred Heavenly Table, greatly comforted and marvellously refreshed, may they vouchsafe to remember me, who am so poor and unworthy.

CHAPTER 18

(The translation of this Chapter is not the work of the late Mr. G. F. Maine, who died with this portion of his work incomplete. Instead, the text of an earlier Collins Classics edition has been used).

That a Man should not be a Curious Searcher into the Holy Sacrament, but an Humble Follower of Christ, Submitting his Reason to Divine Faith

THE VOICE OF CHRIST:

THOU oughtest to beware of curious and unprofitable searching into this most profound Sacrament, if thou wilt not be plunged into the depths of doubt. He that is a searcher of My Majesty, shall be overpowered by the glory of It: God is able to work more than man can understand. A dutiful and humble inquiry after the Truth is allowable, provided we be always ready to be taught, and that we study to walk according to the sound opinions of the Fathers.

It is a blessèd simplicity when a man leaves the difficult ways of questions and disputings, and goes forward in the plain and firm path of God's commandments. Many have lost devotion, whilst they sought to search into things too high. Faith is required at thy hands, and a sincere life; not height of understanding, nor the depth of the mysteries of God. If thou dost not understand, nor conceive the things that are underneath thee, how shalt thou comprehend those which are above thee? Submit thyself unto God, and humble thy sense of Faith, and the light of knowledge shall be given thee, in such degree as shall be profitable and necessary for thee.

Some are grievously tempted about faith and the Holy Sacrament; but this is not to be imputed to themselves, but rather to the enemy. Be not thou anxious herein; do not dispute with thine own thoughts, nor give any answer to doubts suggested by the devil; but trust the words of God, trust His Saints and Prophets, and the wicked enemy will flee from thee. It oftentimes is very profitable to the servant of God to endure such things. For the devil tempteth not unbelievers and sinners, whom he hath already secure possession of; but faithful and religious devout persons he in various ways tempteth and disquieteth.

Go forward, therefore, with simple and undoubting faith, and, with the reverence of a supplicant, draw thou near to the Holy Sacrament; and whatsoever thou art not able to understand, commit securely to Almighty God. God deceiveth thee not; he is deceived that trusteth too much to himself. God walketh with the simple, revealeth Himself to the humble, giveth understanding to the little ones, openeth the sense of pure minds, and hideth grace from the curious and proud. Human reason is feeble and may be deceived, but true Faith cannot be deceived.

All reason and natural search ought to follow Faith, not to go before it, nor to break in upon it. For Faith and Love do most excel here, and work in hidden ways, in this most holy, most sublime Sacrament. God, Who is eternal, and incomprehensible, and of infinite power, doeth things great and unsearchable in Heaven and in earth, and there is no tracing out of his marvellous works. If the works of God were such that they might be easily comprehended by human reason, they could not be justly called marvellous or unspeakable.

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